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E. H. Chapin.

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E. H. Chopin.

PROVIDENCE AND LIFE:

SELECT SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

BROADWAY CHURCH, NEW YORK.

BY

REV. E. H. CHAPIN, D. D.



CINCINNATI:
WILLIAMSON & CANTWELL, PUBLISHERS.

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BIOGRAPHICAL.

EDWIN HUBBELL CHAPIN, the author of this volume of Sermons, was born in Union Village, Washington County, New York, December 29, 1814. The county of Washington might be selected as a model county to illustrate the working of republican institutions in the United States, being originally peopled by a substantial race of Scotchmen, and remarkable for the intelligence, prosperity, and progressive spirit of its people. The academical education of Dr. Chapin was received at a seminary in Bennington, Vermont, and his early tastes are said to have inclined him to the study of law. From this he was, however, soon attracted to the associate editorship of the "Magazine and Advocate," one of the early Universalist newspapers, in Utica, and, at the age of twenty-three, after some experience of preaching, commenced his ministry as pastor of the Independent Christian Church of Richmond, Virginia. Although successful in his Richmond ministry, he soon discovered that the old Virginia of thirty years ago was a field too limited for his professional aspirations and order of mind. On a journey to the North, in September, 1839, he was invited to preach in the Universalist Church, Charlestown, Massachusetts, whose pulpit had recently become vacant by the death of the lamented Thomas F. King. In his first sermon, on Faith, preached in this pulpit, his congregation was electrified by a most touching and eloquent tribute to their beloved pastor, and no time was lost in securing so worthy a successor.

For seven years Mr. Chapin was minister of the church in Charlestown, and rose daily in reputation, both as a preacher and a stirring orator in many of the reforms of the day. His efforts in the cause of Temperance, Odd-fellowship, and Education were marked, and widely influential. Indeed, his eloquent voice never refused to obey the call of humanity. These years were, doubtless, the most fruitful in self-culture of the whole period of his ministry. Among his parishioners and constant hearers were the eminent historian and journalist, Richard Frothingham, Prof. Tweed, perhaps the most careful literary critic of New England, and Thomas Starr King, just then contemplating an entrance into the ministry. It was a liberal education to preach for seven years to such a congregation, and never were pastor and people more happily adjusted to each other. The writer of this sketch remembers the first discourse of Dr. Chapin's, to which he listened in company with Starr King, as one of those eventful evenings which tell so powerfully on the future career of a minister of Christianity. At this time it was his privilege frequently to listen to sermons and addresses from the same source, which have never been surpassed in the most brilliant days of the Doctor's metropolitan ministry.

From this enviable position Mr. Chapin removed to the School Street Church, in Boston, in 1846, becoming associate pastor with Hosea Ballou, and in 1848, made his final removal to the city of New York, where he has been known as pastor of the Fourth Universalist Church for the last twenty years. He began his New York ministry in the church in Murray Street, which soon overflowed. The society then purchased the beautiful church on Broadway, originally occupied by Dr. Bellows. In this large and central audience-room, for many years, Mr. Chapin gathered a Sunday congregation largely representative of the best elements of

BIOGRAPHICAL.

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progressive Northern life. We have heard the most eminent of American statesmen declare that their visits to New York were often timed to include a Sunday of Dr. Chapin's preaching. Here, at the American center of theological and popular influence, Dr. Chapin entered largely into the profession of lecturer, and soon became as eminent in the lecture room as he had already become in the pulpit and on the platform. In the midst of this exhausting life of public speaking his literary pursuits were never forgotten. His library of English literature is probably one of the most valuable private collections in America, and no man better knows where to find, or more keenly to appreciate, the treasures of our language. In 1856, he received from Harvard University the degree of D.D., although he never had enjoyed the opportunity of a collegiate education.

Under this accumulated weight of professional duty, the health of Dr. Chapin, a few years since, became seriously impaired. A timely journey to Europe, his second foreign tour, restored his health, and, on his return, he wisely determined to concentrate his future efforts chiefly upon his ministry. The profession of metropolitan preacher and lecturer can not be many years combined in safety. Parker, Mann, and King had already fallen, under the terrible stress of muscle and brain involved in double professional work, and the country has reason to be grateful that Chapin, Beecher, and Bellows, at nearly the same time, heeded the providential warning, and withdrew their forces within the ample lines of a broad Christian ministry. Three years ago, the Fourth Universalist Society made its final remove to the spacious and elegant church on Fifth Avenue, where Dr. Chapin now ministers in the fullness of his great preaching powers.

Like every man of commanding genius, Dr. Chapin struck the key-note of his great success in his earlier ministry, and

has done little since except develop his own truly original method of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One of his great sermons is the most complete answer to that shallow criticism which declares that the day of the preacher has passed. We venture to say that during the last quarter of a century a score of American preachers have raised the sermon to a higher point of effectiveness as a means of popular influence than it ever before attained; and, in his own peculiar sphere, Dr. Chapin has no rival in this illustrious company. The grand element of his success as a preacher is a large, generous, and inspiring manhood which envelops and interfuses his entire discourse, and compels the most indifferent hearer to acknowledge that a true-hearted and large-minded man is talking to him, in dead earnest, on the greatest themes of life. It is this manhood, in which the childlike spirit is so wonderfully blended with strength and volume, that tunes the wonderful voice and informs the earnest features, and lifts both speaker and hearer to the loftiest heights of religious exaltation. The intellect of Dr. Chapin is not logical, and to an over-critical mind would be regarded too neglectful of details, but it has the decisive test of genius in looking every subject into grand proportions. The first statement of his theme is always so comprehensive and suggestive that the hearer might then go away, feeling that he had never before conceived the vast relations of the most ordinary fact of the Christian life.

But perhaps the crowning splendor of his genius is that power of imagination, without which no man can become a great Christian preacher; and in this exalted faculty he stands preëminent among American divines. By this power he penetrates to the secret places of human nature, reads the motives, feels the temptations, and knows the spiritual conflicts of his fellow-men. When blended with his wonderful power

of pathos, it is impossible to withstand the effect of its tender and touching appeals. When it rises to its loftiest range of observation over human experience, social and national affairs, and the great common interests of humanity, its effect is truly indescribable. Dr. Chapin is not the favorite preacher of that cool, deliberate class who believe in salvation according to Whately and Blair. One thrilling passage upsets their coolness, melts their logical theories, and throws them into the distressing posture of bowing like a bulrush before a tempest of the word of God. But he will always be the favorite preacher of the great American class in whom the human, religious, and executive faculties are preëminent—the class that controls American affairs.

Dr. Chapin, like his lamented friend, Thomas Starr King, has always borne himself amid the theological disputes of the day in a manner most creditable to his character for Christian consecration and saving common sense. No man is more familiar with that whole field of critical radical speculation in which so many of the lesser lights of theology, science, and literature have gone out, through skepticism, to the blankness of atheistic negation. His brilliant imagination and tender affections have never been seduced into the advocacy of any tendency to an ultra-ritualism and conservatism. His entire manhood instinctively gravitates to the person of Jesus Christ, and his whole ministry is an eloquent commentary on Christ's law of love. Rarely indulging in technical theological discussions, averse to every form of disputatious controversy, not distinguished as an executive manager in ecclesiastical affairs, his preaching is theological, reasonable, practical in the highest sense, always setting before men those few central ideas and principles of the Christian life, from which all just, holy, sweet, and successful living must naturally descend. Thus while always maintaining his denominational relations, there

is no American preacher to whom Christian people of every sect more gladly listen, or who is more powerful to reach and move the great masses of his countrymen who are outside of any division of the Christian Church.

Like Wesley, Whitfield, King, and, indeed, almost every great preacher, the published discourses of Dr. Chapin can never fully convey to the reader the power of the spoken discourse—although, to any one familiar with his ministry, they at once recall and suggest the highest delight of his life. The present volume of Sermons may be regarded as a fair specimen of his discourses reduced to writing. They deal largely with those great themes of Providence and the grander aspects of human life, in which the great preacher excels. Their reading will be eminently instructive in the closet, but they will produce their best effect as literary productions if the reader lays down the book, resolved to hear the great and good man, of whom any written word must be so feeble and imperfect a representative.

It is due to the former publisher of this volume, our late esteemed brother, Henry Lyon, to say that it first appeared in New York, under the title of "Select Sermons." It is now republished, in more attractive form, under a new title, "Providence and Life," which is regarded by the present publishers as more expressive of its contents. It is confidently believed that no volume of discourses more valuable to the Christian community has been put forth from the Western Religious Press.

A. D. MAYO.

CINCINNATI, November, 1868.

PREFACE.

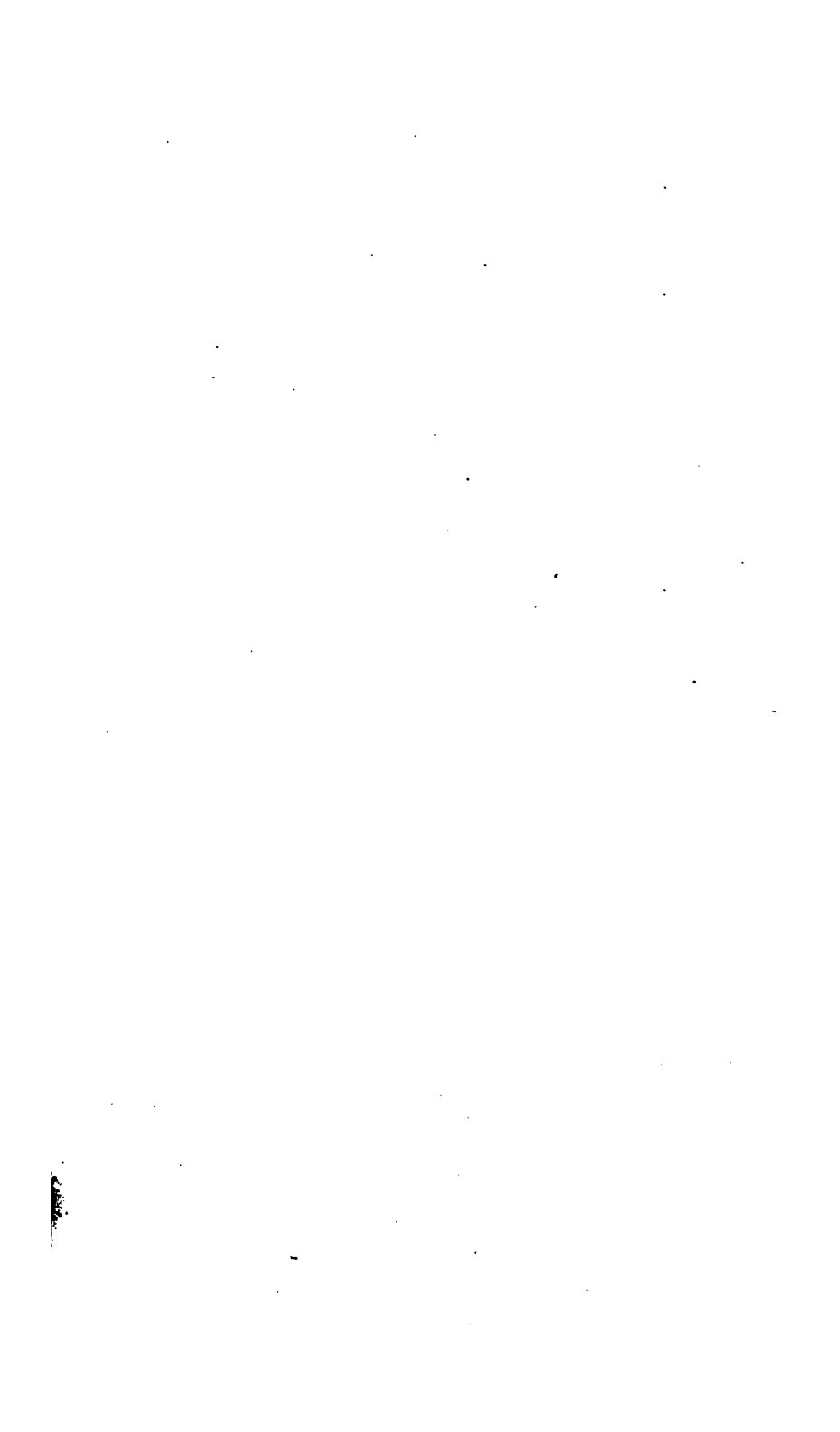
FROM the sermons which I have preached in New York, I have selected some that were in a convenient shape for publication, and have gathered them into the present volume. This book, therefore, hardly needs any other preface than the title-page. I observe, however, that as it is a *selection*, no body need look into it for a system of theology, or even for a statement of *all* my views of vital and practical religion. But, without any affectation, I venture to say that while the scholar or theologian may find little to interest him in these pages, I verily believe that what I have preached here *is* religion;—and having tried to preach as one who does believe so, I hope that some who may take up the book will find in it that which will apply to their spiritual condition and meet their wants. I pray that God's blessing may rest upon it, and that it may do something for Christ's cause in the world. I merely add, that should the reader find some repetition of ideas in these sermons, and even of language, the fact that they had no serial connection, and were preached at times wide apart, must be my excuse.

E. H. C.



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PROVIDENCE AND LIFE.

I.

Providential Adjustments.

For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

MATTHEW v. 34.

MAN has been described as "a being of large discourse, looking before and after." He might also be designated as a being possessing a two-fold faculty of vision; for both in its comprehensiveness and its minuteness, he is distinguished from all other creatures in the world around him. Of all others, man alone is endowed with that analytic power which searches the lowest kingdoms of nature, and penetrates the heart of things. While, on the other hand, with the grandest achievements of his thought he bridges immensities of space, on which the brute turns blank and unspeculative eyes.

This double vision suggests the two-fold purpose and obligation of existence. Related both to the earth and to the skies, we are creatures of broad possibility and narrow actuality. Our interest sweeps through the universe ; but our personal occupancy of space and time is exceedingly limited. We are heirs of immortality, and involved with eternal things ; but our immediate work is here, in our own neighborhood, our own vocation, our own homes, and our own hearts.

Now, it is evident that this condition of our nature will develop certain tendencies, and certain needs, to which it is the office of Truth to minister. Any teaching, or revelation, adapted to our wants and our experience, must likewise have a two-fold aspect, and meet us on both sides—must meet us in the excursiveness of our nature, and also in its specialty. Man, a being of minute interests, and vulgar cares, with his eyes fixed on things that lie close around him, needs some light that shall shew him in everything the clear lineaments of duty, and glorify his common path. But man, a being who looks upward ; a creature of forethought, of spiritual sympathies, of boundless aspiration ; needs some Truth comprehensive enough to quiet all the oscillations of his mind, and deep enough for the anchorage of his troubled heart. He needs one or the other of these aspects of Truth, according to his tendency to this or that extreme. For, in the play of this double-vision, man is apt to dwell either too exclusively in the broad view, or in the narrow and intense.

For instance, in some minds there is a tendency to

consider only the vastness of the universe, and to fasten upon generalizations. For such tendencies the science of astronomy affords scope. It takes the thoughts of man away from the point of observation, and carries them out into the immense movement of systems; that utmost rim of telescopic vision whose burning circuit is only a wheel within a wheel. And as the earth dwindles in the shadow of his observatory, and glides forgotten beneath his feet, we do not wonder that details become absorbed in generalities, and the interest of individual things is lost in their relations as parts of an austere and splendid order; until the intellect retains only the conception of general laws, a general Providence, and finally of a philosophical God—an Infinite intelligence that embosoms all things, but is too vast for any special issues, too abstract for any personal regard.

But this extreme of human thought is recalled by the other pole of Truth. Science, leading man up the awful steep of worlds, and through boundless areas of general law, also bids him turn and look downward at the throbbing mechanism of a fly, of a mote; at the processes of a water-drop or a cell-germ; at the unflawed beauty of a sea-shell, as though Infinite skill had combined all its resources, and concentrated its care upon that most fragile piece of workmanship. One day, walking over a barren and stony piece of ground, I came upon a little patch of verdure starred all over with yellow flowers of the later summer, and, as it opened upon me so fresh and beautiful, as though it were spread out there simply to touch the sense of

joy, and to add to the measure of boundless Life, for the time it seemed to me as glorious as the firmament ; and the majesty of God was as palpable there in that little, unconsidered plot, as among the splendors of the morning, or in the sparkling tent of midnight. It is a note-worthy fact, that the great things of modern Science are its little things ; the wonderful divisibility of its objects, and the minuteness of its fields of interest. Societies are formed for the consideration of facts which, as man advances in his explorations, keep scaling off from the general stratum of knowledge ; while the largest minds are astonished at the field that opens before them, finding the study of a life-time in the vesicles of animals and plants, in atoms that are unseen by the naked eye, in the inconceivable swarms that people a globule of the sea. And the hand of God is as evident in these minute solitudes, in provisions for these infinitesimal vibrations of being, as in the vastness which drowns our thoughts with glory. The legitimate inference from both these phases of fact is, that Providence is both general and special—that as He encompasses immeasurable space, and works by universal Law, so the minutest object is not below His care, and illustrates His majesty. Everywhere, both morally and physically, the microscopic balances the telescopic eye, and rebukes the tendency to lose special issues, individual interests, personal relations to God, in cold and abstract generalities.

But let me take another illustration. There is a tendency on the part of man to fix his mind in mate-

rial things, and upon the surface—in other words, virtually to make this world everything. I need not enlarge upon this fact. It is too evident in the habits of millions. They are acting only in a dream of the senses, apprehending merely that which they can see and handle, living in the gratification of appetite, living in schemes for mere earthly good, and with hardly a thought of other realities beyond the limit of the senses, broader than this earth which is only a veil or mask of inconceivable glories. This gross exclusiveness of vision, however, is not legitimately corrected on the other hand by treating the world as though it were altogether worthless. That is no genuine spiritualism which goes beyond this world for all its instruction, and spurns these familiar things as merely sensuous and empty. That is true spiritualism which not only recognizes spiritual relations beyond these bars of flesh and sense, and the dim horizon of the natural world, but discerns all things right around it—the common, the homely, in the light of spiritual relations. Here is the evil—not that this world is gross and superficial, but that men live in it grossly and superficially—not that the field is narrow, but that our vision is not penetrative and broad. Surely, one need not flutter beyond these present limits, upon the assumption that all is known that can be known concerning things around us, and therefore that we need higher revelations. *Is* this world, then, an old, dead shell of sense and matter, affording nothing for us to learn? “Known and exhausted” is it? What do we know? The truth that is contained in the most famil-

iar thing? The glory that shimmers in the common dust? The scripture of a flower, with Genesis and Revelation in its bud and calyx? The mystery of thrilling nerve, and beating heart? We *do* need the upward glance, the gaze far beyond this world, not because nothing good is to be found *here*, and nothing fresh and glorious is to be seen—not because it is all unspiritual, and sensuous, and mean—but that we may turn back to our daily round, our familiar tasks, with clearer apprehension. True wisdom is in both the narrow and the comprehensive vision—not to fix our regards in one direction, not to withdraw our consideration from either.

Of course the same train of remark applies to that error which hides the glory of the immortal state, and to the error that with that glory eclipses the significance of the present. The true eye-sight discerns the importance of each condition, and sees the realities of the soul stretching into both worlds, and running through the shadows of the grave. And so this two-fold vision preserves us from worldly absorption and from ascetic contempt, and, rightly blending eternity and time, shows us how we may truly live.

Evidently, then, the Teaching, or Revelation, which is applicable to the deepest experiences of our lives, must meet both these tendencies of our nature, and restrain us from the extremes of a regard either too distant and vast, or else too narrow and intense. Now, we find that the Teachings of Jesus *are* adapted to both these tendencies. At times, He makes the closest personal appeals, driving every man into the centre of his

own individuality, directing his vision to the field of his own heart, and concentrating the interest of life upon his own personal effort. But we know the danger of exclusiveness in this direction. In this very region of intense personality and introspection, grow some of the worst religious errors. I need not enlarge upon the evils of an extreme self-regard ; of a perpetual picking at motives and feeling after personal relations with God. A man sunk in such a narrow shaft of religious consciousness, can only nourish a sickly and fragile piety. He needs to be lifted up to the level of healthy action, of broad objective trust. And, therefore, while, at times, the words of Jesus stir the innermost depths of a man's spirit, so that he who has lain supine and gazing listlessly abroad, feels as never before the personal claim which rests upon him, the demand of present opportunity and the charge of his own soul ; in accordance with this other want of our nature, we find the great Teacher inviting his disciples to look up from their own narrow field of responsibility to the great scope of Providence, and the breadth of that spiritual kingdom of which they were heirs and denizens. Sometimes to the heart heated with vain passions and fretful with balked endeavor ; sometimes to the spirit troubled with cares and fears ; Christ's lessons of Providence and of the Divine Fatherhood, open up with a broad serenity, a vast assurance of Omnipotence and Love, that lifts us above all the shadows of the earth, and, as it were, carries us out into the boundlessness of the firmament. Yes, this Revelation of the All-encompassing Providence over-

arches us at times like the clear night-sky when one halts on his march through the desert; breathing a blessed coolness over our parched and weary nature, and amidst the lonely waste, the drifting sand, and the fluttering tents, looking down upon us with a great and tender assurance of Permanence and Peace.

And who has not felt the need of this great truth—who has not been glad to plunge his individuality into this ocean of superintending goodness and wisdom, and feel, through the struggle and fever of his own little life, the Infinite Heart beating under all things?

Such, then, is the two-fold attitude of our nature, and I have selected the text because it appears to meet both these conditions. It presents a truth to the vision that is too excursive, and to the vision that is too narrow. "For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." In the first place, here is a glimpse, beyond our own affairs, of God's working. Here is a suggestion of Hope and Trust. We see clearly but a very little way. The movements of the world run far beyond the scope of our own action. It is a consoling truth that, in a certain sense, *things take care of themselves*. In other words, there are in things certain Providential Adjustments, which meet the demand of circumstances, and which set themselves promptly and faithfully to work. This fact is beautifully illustrated in the human system. Thus, when any portion of the body receives hurt, how quickly nature responds to the summons, and every little vessel and fibre rallies with its help. Or look abroad in the material world. What a faithful agent nature is, and,

like one set under authority, says to this thing, "Go," and it goeth, and to that, "Come," and it cometh, and to another, "Do this," and it doeth it; and so nature takes care of itself—takes care of its own appointed domain. Surely, these processes are very beautiful; and they are very affecting, too, when we consider how necessary they are to human welfare, to the general good, and yet how absolutely beyond *our* control. Man plants and sows and reaps, and completes the round of his working year. But the year itself moves like a great wheel, beyond his sphere of working, and turns with perpetual and beneficent change. He gathers the sheaves into his bosom, and his barns grow luminous with heaps of golden corn. But as man turns away, and leaves the stubble-fields to be swept by the winds of autumn, Nature, that never rests, patiently goes on with her tasks and prepares for new issues. For a few hours she celebrates as it were a festival. The woods put on gorgeous robes, the skies are lit with strange beauty, and all the face of earth looks like the coronation of a completed work. And then the mighty round begins again. Unseen forces take the rotting straw, the yellow leaf, the chemistry of the brown sod, and work them over for new uses. Under the brown soil they work, under the shroud of ice and snow—taking care of that over which man has no power, but without which he perishes. Consider the beauty, the impressiveness of this fact so old yet ever new! Nature, God's Providential agent, taking care of the things of itself, while we wake and while we sleep! Weaving its beneficent processes

under gloomy veils, quickening decay into fruition, turning carrion to flowers, drawing up foul exhalations into sunset glories and pavilions of the morning, and through the entire round of being, from monads to suns, from the way-side dust to the brain of man, turning ceaselessly its vast wheel of endless Life and splendid transmutation.

But let me further remark that, if we find these Providential Adjustments in *things*, by which they may be said to take care of themselves, it is so with *Times* and *Seasons*. Each day bringing its own issues likewise brings its own helps, and in alliance with our endeavors proffers a Providential work. How often have we experienced the truth of this! The dreaded morrow, that has cast its gloom over so many yesterdays, and prevented our needed sleep, how often have we found its anticipated trials soften and dwindle, as we passed under their shadow! As we entered into the cloud some heavenly voice has saluted us, inspiring us with courage and with hope; some unexpected help has encountered us; we have seen something to mitigate our grief; some clue has led us through the perplexity, and the foreboded ill has broken and vanished as we drew near. Or, if the full tide of anticipated trouble has rolled over us, we have been enabled to bear it, and we are now enriched in life with so much additional experience. "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." If you look forward to it at all, look forward to it as embosoming Providential helps and intentions, and coming only in the appointment of Infinite Wisdom and

Goodness. Surely, there is something broader than all your anticipated evil. There is the Love that surrounds all—there is the sweep of that Divine control in which all the “to-morrows” of Life are borne and carried along.

Here, then, in the first place, is the broad view—the uplifting, excursive, consoling view, which sometimes we need to take amidst the trials of our earthly lot. But you will observe that it is also a *limiting* view, and bids us fix our attention on the period of time in which we actually stand. And this is a very practical suggestion. For one thing, it is a suggestion replete with *comfort*. Do we anticipate trouble on the morrow? Does it fling from its unpenetrated depths a cold and gloomy shadow over our hearts? Why, as yet, we have nothing to do with to-morrow. To-morrow may never come to us. We do not live in to-morrow. We cannot find it in any of our title-deeds. The man who owns whole blocks of real estate, and great ships on the sea, does not own a single minute of to-morrow. To-morrow! it is a mysterious possibility, not yet born. It lies under the seal of midnight—behind the veil of glittering constellations. It has not yet lifted itself in the light of the dawn. We may crowd it with dreams, with fancies, with wondrous expectations, with dancing figures of our joy with spectres of our dread. The waiting bride may light it up with festal splendor, the child may see shapes of fairy-land looking through the ivory gate, the schemer may set in it the culmination of his hopes, the doomed felon may hear it already opening like the jar of a prison-gate, and

the sick man may shudder at the thought of its issues, and feel its muffled tread already in his heart. But we have no right to enter its unknown field, and appropriate from it a single thing as though it actually were, or to live and feel as though it were. We have no right to draw down its sorrows any more than its joys upon our naked hearts, and disturb them with the vibration of its unrendered sufferings. All the sorrow that God gives us is to-day's sorrow—all the trial we have to contend with is to-day's trial—and, in all the difficulty and sadness of life, it is under the shadow of to-day's actuality that we stand, not the penumbra of to-morrow's possibility.

Now, I beseech you, consider for a moment how the troubles of life would be lightened, if we thus regarded only what is, and did not live in anticipated sorrow. Let any man ask himself how much of his trouble is borrowed trouble, and is simply the shadow of a possible substance. It has been wisely urged by another, that we should take "short views" in life. Let us, at least, take short views in the direction of care and trouble, not stretching beyond that which is actually before us.

Let us not suppose, however, that the truth proclaimed in the text is merely a matter of *comfort*. If so we might draw from it immoral and irreligious suggestion. There might be some who would say—"If we are to take no thought for the morrow, let us in all things live loosely. Let us take no spiritual care. Let us make no moral provision. Let us act without reference to the soul's destiny." But, surely,

these are not things of to-morrow ; they are things of *to-day*. And this very fact that the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,—what does it imply ? Why, if the morrow takes thought for the things of itself, it does *not* take thought for the things of to-day, and it is with the things of to-day that we are shut in and have to do. And so the truth announced in the text not only inspires *consolation*, but *diligence*, and the most intense activity. The difficulty with us is apt to be this—we borrow for to-day the troubles of to-morrow, and carry over to to-morrow the duties of to-day. We shuffle off the business that really belongs to us, and trade on capital that does not. We set our forebodings to work, and let our working powers rest.

Now, the truth under consideration is a corrective for all this. “The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” This is a blessed fact to contemplate when you want to take a broad, Providential view of things. But, moreover, it is a great fact to consider, because it also bids us take an immediate and intense view of things—a view of things right around us. It actually hems us in to to-day. Whatever belongs to itself *it* will take care of ; but whatever belongs to to-day *you* must take care of. It makes to-day a great thing, an important, all-pressing consideration. And you see at once that the doctrine which it suggests is very far from prompting to negligence or indifference. For is not spiritual care a matter of to-day ? Is not the girding and preparation of our moral nature a matter of to-day ? Is not the work

of duty an affair of to-day? Do not the currents of our spiritual destiny flow with us here to-day?

We sometimes speak of men who live for the day; meaning thereby, men who live frivolously, sensually; live in the glow of present gratification. But, in reality, these are the men who are living for to-morrow; that is, they are living for what the coming waves of chance will bring them. They are *not* living in all the opportunity and possibility of the present. But this is the true method of living—letting the morrow take thought for the things of itself, but we taking thought for the things of to-day.

And do we really apprehend what a *day* is? Do we feel its importance? Do we know its capacity? A Day! It has risen upon us from the great deep of eternity, girt round with wonder; emerging from the womb of darkness; a new creation of Life and Light spoken into being by the Word of God. In itself one entire and perfect sphere of space and time, filled and emptied of the sun. Every past generation is represented in it—it is the flowering of all history. And in so much it is richer and better than all other days which have preceded it. And *we* have been recreated to new opportunities, with new powers; called to this utmost promontory of actual time, this centre of all converging life. And it is for to-day's work we have been endowed—it is for this that we are pressed and surrounded with these facilities. The sum of our entire being is concentrated here. And to-day is all the time we absolutely have. "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." But

what belongs to the morrow? Not a single task of present duty—not one claim of the present hour!

In this faculty of two-fold vision, let us look to the morrow as a Providential season which, when it comes, will bring its own adjustments; but let us not look to it, either for postponement, or for fear. And, whatever else it suggests, let us receive from it the suggestion both of present trust, and present action. Let not its possibilities balk or hinder any work of to-day—take from it none of its possible troubles—bequeath to it none of to-day's actual duties.

And here let me say that really this is the spirit in which any great work is to be carried on, as well as our special and private obligations. It is a profound and often fatal error for us to trouble present demands with future issues. When the trumpet-blast summons us to the battle, we ought not to anticipate the bugle-note of retreat.

"It is of no use to try!"—how much is defeated in that assumption respecting any work or duty. What right have we to dally with this borrowed conception? Do the thing that is right in the present. Whatever may occur to inspire either hope or fear, be simply loyal. Do you speak of "*failure*?" What is it that so far has failed? Surely, not your conviction that this is God's Right, God's Truth, which you have been striving to maintain. And for any cause there can be no absolutely fatal symptom, except a demonstration of its falsity.

But you assume that the cause which has held your conscience and your heart *will* fail. That is not a

word for you to say, or a thought for you to acquiesce in. Stand at your post in the army and obey your orders. You do not control the great movement of the battle. You cannot tell how God will rally the scattered wings, or call up His reserve.

Permit me still further to say, that in this train of thought is indicated the essence, the vitality of all Religion. Its deepest sanctions are not in the Past, or in the Future, but in the fact of the Eternal now—the present and spiritual realities with which we are every moment involved. He is best qualified to be and to act, who apprehends this state as an integral part of his moral and perpetual existence; and who feels that each day, each hour, is precious in itself, as belonging to the vast sweep of eternity. He it is who for the highest as well as the most common interest of being, will do to-day what his hands find to do; and will feel that God is with him and he is in the Divine Presence now.

“The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,” and the day take thought for the things of itself. Each season, in its Providential adjustments, will faithfully perform *its* office. See, the day is winding up! How much significance in this familiar fact. The day is winding up, but only consider how everything outside the sphere of human agency has been faithfully performed. The sun, the air, the wheeling earth, all in their order, each “beautiful in its time.” Ah! I think how faithfully God fulfils His work—a work that must be done and yet that man cannot do for himself. But oh! my hearer, you also this day

have had *your* trusts. And how have you discharged them? Have you loyally, unreservedly, like nature in all its orbits, accepted each recurring point of duty, and filled each moment with its immediate purpose? Thus truly, thus only, are you making ready for the morrow, whatever that morrow's character or issues may be.

To fill every hour as it comes with that which it calls upon us to do, this is better than foreboding; this indeed is far better than unfaithful postponement. To fill each opening season with its appropriate work, to close it with its completed benediction,—this may seem a little thing, but really it is a very great thing. It is an integral part of that great sum that makes up character and life; that makes up duty and destiny.

II.

Christ's Promise.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW XI. 28.

IN the first place, I call your attention to the fact that there is something very remarkable not only in the *substance*, but in the *manner* of these words. They reveal a self-conscious authority and power in the speaker, which distinguishes Him from any mere teacher or philosopher who ever came into the world. Here is no elaboration of argument, no hesitancy of opinion, but direct and full assurance. It is the manner of one speaking out of Himself, and knowing what He affirms; identifying His promise with His own Personality. "Come"—not unto a theory, or an opinion—but "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." There was but one who ever stood up among men, and spoke in this way.

And thus conscious not only *of* what He speaks, but *to* what He speaks! Such a wide range of application to His words! There are so many who *do* labor, and *are* heavy laden. Nay, when we duly consider the

matter, they actually comprise the entire human race, and they reach to the profoundest need of all. Can we conceive of an invitation which strikes upon a more common chord than this? Is there any term which so comprehensively describes and summons men of the most diverse classes? *Riches* and *Poverty*—do not men labor, are they not heavy laden, in both conditions? Will not these terms answer for the hearts that are sick in the midst of *pleasure*, as well as for the weary frames that are racked with *pain*?

Now one of the best marks of a good physician is skill in diagnosis. Through all the labyrinths of this mysterious organism, under the most complex disguises, his sure eye traces the radical difficulty. He says precisely—"Your disease is *here*." So the Great Physician indicated the radical disease of humanity at large, with that one word "Rest."

For I need go no farther than your own consciousness to confirm the general applicability of the promise in the text, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do we not find something within ourselves answering to this call? We read and hear many of these scriptural passages with indifference, until some personal experience elicits their meaning. A wave of the heart washes over them, and then we see all their depth and beauty. But the passage before us, whenever uttered, must be felt, though its real fulness may come out only under certain conditions. I have heard the words pronounced by a gifted singer when they broke upon me with a significance I had never felt before, opening as

it were into the calm recesses of the Saviour's own spirit; revealing that peace which was deepest even in Him. They will always touch us with their great tenderness, and yet we may hear them as though they were addressed only to a *class* of men—only to the very weary, and the very miserable. A little knowledge of ourselves, however, will convince us that they are actually addressed to *all* men, and that we and all others need, more than anything else, the application of this promise.

Oh, yes! it is not alone the physically tired, the abjectly wretched—the long procession of those whose faces are pale with sorrow and marked with traces of unrest—it is not these alone that should start forward to meet this invitation of Jesus: but all conditions of humanity—bosoms throbbing under silks and jewelry, heads crowned with pomp and pride, and hearts busy with the cares and pleasures and diversified shows of this world. Man indicates his profoundest needs by his highest ideals. That which is farthest from his grasp is brightest to his vision. And so the cravings of his soul are betrayed in his associations with the idea of "Rest." For he makes it the synonyme of supreme good. The conception over-arches the trouble and effort of his daily life, as the deep, serene sky over-arches the earth. It is to "Rest" that he looks forward in his most eager pursuits. This is to be the end of wealth, of power, of lofty fame—some niche of glory where he may repose upon his honors; some sunny retreat, in which his later life may slowly burn away like a summer evening. What a blessing does

he acknowledge in *literal* rest ; in the sleep whose soft oblivion makes an island of every day, and breaks the hold of continuous care ; that cools the hot brain, and bathes the weary eye-lids, and lets the buffeted and foundering heart cast anchor every night in some harbor of happy dreams. He feels the beneficence of that law which makes even misery halt, and besieging fortune strike its tents, and in the great democracy of nature levels the children of men in common helplessness and common need ; finding no conditions so wretched, no spot so bleak, that even the most desperate cannot recline nearer to the bosom of the common mother, and forget for a little while their sorrow and their shame.

And when, in the merely natural view of things, man would soften the gloom of the grave, and find some consolation in that which is inevitable, he thinks of it as a place of kindly *rest*—a port where the storms of life never beat, and the forms that have been tossed on its chafing waves lie quiet forevermore. There the child nestles as peacefully as ever it lay in its mother's arms, and the workman's hands lie still by his side, and the thinker's brain is pillowed in silent mystery, and the poor girl's broken heart is steeped in a balm that extracts its secret woe, and is in the keeping of a charity that covers all blame. And always this idea of unbroken quiet broods around the grave ; in sunshine and moonlight, under the watch of the midnight sky, when winter transforms the poorest mound into sculptured marble, or summer glorifies it with its procession of flowers. Our own poet has linked the great sleep-

ing-place to all the serenity of nature, and a greater poet than he, for thousands of years, has intensified our impression of that magnificent silence and "ease of Death," where he might "have lain still and been quiet, and slept with kings and counsellors of the earth . . . with princes that had gold," and "who filled their houses with silver," where "the prisoners rest together," where "the small and great are," where "the servant is free from his master," where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Nay, it is not merely the realm of silence and of darkness, but of the highest bliss, that we associate with this ideal, calling it "The Land of Rest."

Measuring, then, the depth of man's desire by the height of this conception, we find it to be a universal craving of human nature. Therefore surely it was not mere earthly wisdom that thus knew what was in man so much better than even man himself knows, and that with a voice of self-conscious authority, uttered these tender, yet profound words—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Passing now to the *substance* of this promise, we discover that it has various applications. While, as I have just said, the response to Christ's invitation issues from the common heart of humanity, it comes from the depths of different experiences. There are various conditions of mind and soul in which man feels this need of rest.

I. For instance, the words of the text are applicable to those who are engaged in the conflict of *Doubt*.

And this is by no means a limited experience at the present time, for ours is peculiarly an age of doubt. Not, as it seems to me, an age of positive *un*-religion, but, rather, a period of sincere interest in religious realities, without settled convictions ; a breaking up of the depths of religious thought—very different from the dogmatic infidelity and superficial materialism of the last century—thought desiring to reach some solid ground of faith ; seeking rest, though, it may be, finding none. Some seem disposed to regard this state of mind as a condition of moral weakness, if not of positive sin. He who withholds his assent from current beliefs, or questions the ground of received opinions, is looked upon not only as one blinded with error, but as one guilty of an offence. But surely we should learn to discriminate between earnest, honest doubt, and a voluntary and flippant scepticism. On the other hand, we should distinguish between decided steadfastness in our own convictions, between a loyal preference of the right to the wrong, and arrogant judgment as to the integrity of those who may differ from us. We do not compromise our own faith by admitting the honesty of another's doubt. And while holding fast our own convictions, we may sympathize with the struggles of one who is trying to attain the same convictions, but who, as yet, has failed. Evidently a state of doubt may spring from the very earnestness of a man's devotion to the Truth ; not, as appears to be so often assumed, from his wilful preference of error. I ask, what is there in this mere fact of doubting, that should put a man outside the pale of our respect and regard, or

cause us to question even the depth of his *religious* life? He, in his doubt, may be much more loyal than you in your faith. It may be that he is so bent on attaining reality, he cannot be content with anything that seems to him other than reality. He is so convinced that Truth must be a matter of conviction, that he can be forced into no politic confession, into no smothering of thought. Now I have no regard for a cold, speculative intellect, that prides itself on non-conformity, and delights in doubt, while it keeps aloof from those warm and practical currents which lead towards a solution. But I verily believe that there is more religious vitality, more spiritual hopefulness, in an earnest seeker of the Truth, baffled as yet in his aim, than in a whole pew-load of strait believers, who have hummed their assent to propositions which they have never brought distinctly before their minds, and which they have never sounded with their hearts. It is better to be earnest about *things*, than to be satisfied with mere *words*. And I cannot help thinking that the promise—"Seek, and ye shall find," applies to those who are bent on discovering Truth as well as other blessings; and if a man does seek for this with a true heart, surely God will lead him to all needful conclusions. Now a man is not justified in setting himself to work for the mere purpose of *making* doubts; every once in the while knocking in pieces the fabric of his own belief to scrutinize its interior mechanism. There is a time when we should rest upon reasonable convictions, and when, if the intellect can see clearly no further, we judge of opinions as we do of men—by



their *fruits*. Still it is not good for a man to smother his doubt, or to deny it; but to feel it clear through, sift it, probe it, and turn it up to the light. At least I am sure it is not the Christian way to meet doubt with denunciation and contempt—as though it were a condition of positive wickedness as well as of error. Let me say, once more, that I exempt from this consideration all *heartless* disbelief, all intellectual affectation, all that little second-hand scepticism which young men sometimes cultivate as they cultivate a beard,—in that callow season when they stumble against “the Absolute,” and chatter about “the All.” I attach great importance to the inquiry how far error is *voluntary*, and therefore is a result for which men are responsible. But where there *is* sincere, struggling, inevitable doubt, I say there the spirit of Christianity comes not in wrathful antagonism and the assumption of wilful unbelief, but with sympathy for the real need that underlies all this earnest yet baffled seeking. It comes to meet the wants of that case, and offer its solution as the ground of “*Rest*.” It comes not in antagonism to the nature that sends up this cry of doubt, but in *response* to it. It was precisely at this point that the Apostle Paul applied the Gospel. He saw what men *felt* after: He offered them a *Revelation* of that “Unknown God” whom they ignorantly worshipped. He did not denounce the Athenians, but appealed to them as one who discerned the depth of want that was manifest in their religious ignorance, and who knew that he had something better. And I believe that it is this condition of sincere but unanswered inquiry that

Christ Himself addresses in the words of the text. He has come into the world not to *silence* doubts, but to *answer them*. Answer them by His Truth and His Faith, as the only adequate solution of the great mysteries of existence.

I do not say that He has answered all possible questions, and left no room for intellectual endeavor. But I do say that He has shown enough to give assurance to the trusting soul, and repose to the tired thought. I do affirm that in His Revelation of the Fatherhood of God, and of the immortality of man, He has cast a broad light upon events—light enough to explain their drift, and impart confidence as to their end. I maintain that, receiving His Truth, no human heart need be miserable, no brain distracted. In short, He has answered the most necessary questions concerning God and human destiny. There is ample range for speculation, if the mind delights to drift among problems which it can never solve. It may tug at the old question of “the origin of evil,” and find it good exercise as a piece of intellectual gymnastics; but the *heart* is satisfied when it has discovered the *uses* of evil. We are free to reject Christianity if in this world of hopes and fears we can find anything better—anything that more completely fills our deepest wants. But we cannot find anything better—anything near so good—anything that kindles such Divine light amid our perplexity and our dread. We may cast it off and try to live without it. But we cannot live a great while without it, in any condition of full and noble manhood; meeting the trials of life, and the questions which open



in all our social relations, and the events which press our nature into an intense consciousness of itself; we cannot do this, without discovering our need of Christ's words to live and to suffer, to do and to die by. Therefore, there is no utterance in this world that so answers to what is deepest in us, and that so fulfils its promise, as that utterance wafted to us in our doubts and perplexities, over the lapse of ages—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

II. But there is another experience of the human heart which is met by Christ's invitation in the text. It is an experience deeper and more common even than that of doubt—it is the experience of *Sin*. Some may say that here indeed is the spring of all other misery and unrest—of all painful doubt and weariness. Doubtless it *is* the spring of more evil than we can fathom, and to nothing are the Saviour's words more strictly applicable. "All ye that labor and are heavy laden"—does not this truly describe those who are in this spiritual thralldom and wretchedness? Not all laboring with this consciousness of sin, but all heavy laden. Not all, perhaps, even conscious that they *are* heavy laden. There are some whose sins, apparently, do not trouble them; and who do evil things with a lamentable unconsciousness of iniquity. Moreover, the worst sins are, perhaps, those that are least felt—the most malignant but it may be not the most unpopular. We raise a hue and cry against certain gross vices. We lift hands of horror against the sin that damages property, or reputation; and all this

very properly perhaps. But the sin that lurks under the veil of respectability, and cuts athwart no human law, but eats into our very selves like a canker, and demoralizes us at the core—the rooted selfishness, the *moral* unbelief, the un-Christ-like pride, down in the centre of our hearts, we may bear but little consciousness of *that*. And yet the omniscient eye may see more abomination packed away thus under smooth personal decencies, than in the reeling brutality of the drunkard, or the painted shame of the harlot, or any other overt instances of guilt that hang out *signals* of moral shipwreck. Moreover, sharp, ragged sins—“violent sins,” as we may call them—puncture the conscience more keenly, and lead to a more intense repentance, than this inert guilt that coils in smooth, complacent folds about the heart. A tremendous lie may frighten a man out of the habit of lying altogether, who will daily serve out a batch of “white lies,” and sleep none the less soundly.

I repeat, then, although sin is really a heavy load, there may be a great many who are not conscious that they are heavy laden. And yet, I ask—is any man utterly at rest in sin? Are the better instincts of the soul ever completely quenched? In the most hardened nature is there not an aspiring something that feels the guilty gravitation which drags it down? The Prodigal, in his gayest moments, within the circle of the dance and the wine-cup, was he not heavy laden, and did he not know that he was heavy laden, though he may not have felt his burden so intensely as when he sat among the husks and the swine? Look around

you at the most repulsive forms of guilt ; at the dregs of human abomination that are blown like scum over the surface of society. Do you think that there is one so low, so crusted with uncleanness, so far beneath the line that separates the meanest man from the brute that perishes, that he never feels he *is* heavy laden ? Is there no slight nerve that quivers in that nature which still is immortal ? Is there no chord in that defaced soul that even yet announces the fact that all is not well with it ? Is there to-night, in any haunt of riot and shame, a nether darkness in our social state so profound that these words of Jesus would convey no meaning, and meet with no response ? A response waking up oh, what numb, sore chords ! calling up oh, what visions of lost innocence—vibrating through what years of misery—as this Divine utterance, falling from His lips who rejected no penitent, who cast no scorn even upon the most degraded, should sweep over those wild and guilty hearts—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The glory of the gospel appears in its application to the grossest sinners, in its solicitude for the vilest, in hope and tenderness for the most abject. But, after all, these are not the greatest sinners. There is that hardness of heart which is covered with a smooth surface ; there is that polished adamantine wickedness of epicureanism and profligacy ; there is miserly selfishness, vain worldliness, proud self-righteousness ; yet even concerning any one of these, I ask—is it entirely at ease ? Has it no consciousness of being heavy

laden? In all its glitter, its frivolity, its isolation, its abundance of possession, does it not need rest?

In this condition of sin, then, all men are heavy laden—in some way, all men feel that it is so with them—but all do not labor in the full consciousness of sin. The best of men do. Paul did. The great Apostle felt a mortal conflict going on within him, and cried out in the bitterness of his great misery. And any man in this condition—any man who, like that poor prodigal, has risen to his feet, and with streaming eyes turned towards the Father's face, saying "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight"—will know what it is to need and to find the Rest which Christ promises.

Men find that rest not in any redeeming virtue of their own which cancels their past sins, or insures them against present sinfulness, but in their full surrender to that divine love which was made manifest in Jesus. They trust, and so they rest. Conscious that evil is in them, they are conscious that divine help is in them also; and they are lifted above their failures and defeats by this conscious alliance in spirit with the Infinite One. The law condemns them. They strike against it and are beaten down. The Spirit assures them; they cast themselves upon its merciful sympathy, and are saved. Yes, there is a substantial ground of rest for us when we actually feel that God knows our hearts clear through, and do not try to hide ourselves, or disguise anything that is within us from His eye, but in simple confession of our sinfulness rely upon His mercy and His help.

The man who, roused to conscious conflict with his

sins, surrenders himself to this conviction of the Divine sympathy and love, passes into the region of spiritual freedom. He is made free not from all *liability* to sin, but from *slavery* to sin; the desire, the motive, the love of goodness is in him, obviating the necessity of any *Law* to restrain him from evil, and placing him in alliance with the Spirit of God. In this freedom he possesses not sluggish repose—which is not what the word means even for earth or heaven; but he has harmonious activity, which is Christ's promised Rest. He is still at war, but in the deepest recesses of his being, at the core of his life, he is at peace. I suppose this is akin to what Paul means when he says that "the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." I suppose that it was in this way, that from his terrible inward conflict that glorious spiritual warrior found Rest.

III. Thus far I have dwelt upon experiences which may be practically limited—the experience of doubt to those who have been roused to *think* upon great spiritual realities, the experience of sin to those who have been roused to *feel* these realities.

There may be those, however, who would say—though they ought not to say it—"these words of Christ do not reach us in either of these experiences." Let me, then, inquire whether a response to the invitation in the text does not issue from the condition of our common and daily life. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I ask, does not this appeal find some response

in your hearts? Does it not strike there as if it meant something for each of you? I will not now specify the openly miserable and weary, the sorrow-stricken children of humanity, to whom these words have come for nineteen hundred years with such sweetness and assurance; but I ask any man who now hears me—are *you* completely at rest in present conditions? Do you not feel the need of something that does not come from material possessions, and is not a gift of this outward world? It is a very simple question—but I would put it very earnestly. Do you not feel that in the Truth, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, there *is* that which you cannot rest without—which you *can* rest with?

Let me suggest a few instances. I ask, then, do we not in the various transactions of life need a central *poise*, or *principle*—an axis of moral rest from which all our conduct shall radiate, and also a centre of inspiration? Do we not need a principle which, broad enough for those great occasions which are rare in the transactions of life, is fitted to the smaller instances that occur every day? Now Christ's Law of Love to God and to man, is just that principle. And a man without such a principle is a man without peace. Even though he may not be much troubled in conscience, he *is* perplexed with expedients. Unless he stands on the simple basis of Right, he is continually inventing devices and dodging consequences. No man in this world of dollars and cents, of disappointments and cares, stands so firmly grounded as he who has only one law of action for all occasions, and

that is the law of right action. He may fall into trouble, but he never meets with any real disaster. His worldly possessions may dissolve, but *he* is not shipwrecked. In the midst of whirling calamities and broken schemes, he has central peace, stable as the throne of God.

Now, as a question to be answered by practical experience, I ask—do not men need such a central poise and principle to check their passions and to guide their aims? It is, I repeat, a Providential fact, that no man can rest in anything but the decisions of this strait Rule of Righteousness. He who obeys it and lives from it, when he has tried to do all that it inspires him to do, in the midst of all disappointments and defeats, can calmly fold his hands and wait for further intimations. But the man of expedients must keep patching and tinkering, and be driven from point to point, because his machinery does not fit and is perpetually out of order somewhere.

It is so in public instances. An unrighteous decision never settled a matter. The just course for the time being may seem paralyzed and bound—the Truth put to sleep. But God is in the universe, working through all things, and the guilty expedient cannot remain. The Truth simmers and heaves under all these devices, and makes manifest the law—"first pure, *then* peaceable." Battle-fields that break the green earth into furrows, are the places where Truth has heaved the clods from its coffin, and started forth to vindicate its everlasting majesty. The ruins of great empires are but the sundered walls and shat-

tered slabs of gigantic sepulchres in which men have vainly endeavored to seal up their own iniquity, and have commemorated a lie. In public action, in common life, there is no rest except in righteous principle.

But, again, as a question of practical, every-day interest, I ask—do we not need the rest of substantial *possession*? The things of this world coming and going in every alternation of seed-time and harvest. Life running by us like a roaring sea—nay, not running by us, but running *with* us—our youth gliding away like a dream—the faces we love altering with touches of relentless time, and fading in the mist of death—our vigor drying up, and our strength becoming exhausted—our wealth that we meant to lean upon shrivelling to cinders—our hold upon the world itself slipping every hour—with all this, I ask, do we not need such an inward assurance, such a vision of immortal Good, such a communion with the Eternal, such a consciousness of Rest in the Unchangeable God, as verily does spring up in our own experience of the faith and the truth of Jesus Christ?

Finally, let me ask—do we not need the rest of *spiritual* harmony—of essential harmony with all things that God has made, and with God Himself? We all know that a bad man is in discord with the great facts of life. But it is not merely the grossly sinful, the profligate and abandoned, that lack this profound harmony with things, but those whose lives are aimless and superficial, who are not growing into the stature of their full manhood, or fulfilling the highest ends of their being. Now look abroad in

the world of nature! See how things there live up to their best, and in their sphere fulfil a perfect work. Now, as at the first, it may be said of these that they are "good." But how shall we gain such a benediction? Only as we too live up to our best—as we come into conscious harmony, not only with nature, but with the God of Nature, the God of Life—as we come unto Him who invites us in the text, entering into the communion, into the very Life of Christ. In that spiritual harmony we shall find Rest. Rest, not sleep, not inaction—but the repose that accords with the noblest effort, the peace that is compatible with toil. Rest which is not a dream of celestial idleness, but the harmony of the grandest action.

Surely, then, in some way, these words of Jesus do reach every one of us. They strike upon some chord, they awaken some response in every heart. For ages that blessed promise has sounded through the world. Answer, children of humanity; in all life's change and action, in all its sin and sorrow, answer; for this is what we all need—Rest.

III.

The Law of Manifestation.

For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested.

MARK IV. 22.

THIS declaration of our Saviour was applicable both to the Divine Word which He taught, and to His hearers as the early believers and missionaries of that Word. His Truth was accessible to all men. For every right mind, and for every devout heart, it had but one meaning, and for all such that meaning would come out more and more distinctly. There was no exoteric and esoteric teaching—priest's doctrine and people's doctrine—an apparent signification for one, and a mystic sense for the other. For all it was the same free, single Truth. What was spoken in the ear should be proclaimed upon the house-top. Whatever was hidden should be manifested.

And those who in that early day took their lives in their hands, and went out preaching the Gospel among all nations, must have drawn great consolation from the thought, that there was nothing hidden that should not be made known—that although the Truth which

they proclaimed was now covered with contempt and trampled under foot of men, it should one day burst forth in glory, and, blossoming out of their very blood and ashes, should bear through all ages the record of their names. What the persecuted cause was, and what they were who maintained it, would not always be hidden, but would be manifested. A glorious thought for them, and a glorious thought for good and true men in every time!

But the declaration in the text yields not only these special applications. It announces, I think, a general Law, which operates in nature, in history, and in personal experience. In each of these appears the fact, that "there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested."

The instances which verify this statement in the *natural world*, meet us on every hand. Although many mysteries brood among these laws and forces of matter, and our wisdom is often balked before the humblest fact, we cannot affirm that anything has been made to be forever hidden. If now it lies deep and far, this is not a prohibition to our seeking, but a solicitation of our faculties, which delight not so much in the truth already gained, as in the truth to be acquired, and linger with unquenchable aspiration on the twilight confines of hidden mystery and perpetual suggestion. If we search after any secret of nature with right and reverent minds, all analogies assure us that it shall yet be made manifest.

Thus also in the course of history. The waves of Time cast up old secrets and by-gone plots, and reveal interior facts that, like the fragments of Pompeii and


Ninevah, have been buried for ages. So with the record of crime. The cunning fraud is unravelled in the process of events; the forger's guilt stands revealed in a ray of light; and the murderer's deed is printed on the moist earth, or the blood-red leaf, or betrayed years afterward by spot, or crevice, or skeleton mouldering in the wall.

But among the abounding instances that establish the declaration in the text, not only as a particular Rule, but as a general Law, there are two or three departments of human experience in which this Law may be profitably studied,—and to these I now invite your especial attention.

I. “There is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested.” In the first place, I ask you to consider this as a fact of *personal life*. For illustration, take the elements of individual character—the qualities of a man's inmost being. Now I maintain that, in some way, these qualities will become evident; will strike through into his visible life. Men differ greatly in degrees of transparency and amount of surface action. Indeed, perhaps in nothing do they differ more than in this. There are some who can be seen through like crystal. Every valve and vein in them is as palpable as their faces. All their thoughts and passions rush out at once. It is useless for them to affect secrecy. They never could make negotiators or diplomatists. Whether they are pleased or annoyed, whether they are in love or in wrath, every muscle of their faces is an electric telegraph, and betrays its signals. But there are others whose purposes and motives flow in

opaque silence. We cannot read them. The title-page tells us little of what is in the volume. And yet even these men, if not exactly known, are *felt*. His very concealment and imperviousness is itself a revelation. I recollect it was said of one who for many years held a high and almost saintly reputation, but who at length stood exposed as a splendid scoundrel,—it was said of him that, with all his apparent purity and calm majesty of character, there had always been evident in the depths of him—close about his heart, as it were—a sort of blur or film, like the speck in the core of a moss-agate. So that which was hidden in him, was really manifested. The fatal fact in the case of a hypocrite is, that he *is* a hypocrite. And I say concerning him, or concerning anybody else who, either by nature or by art, conceals certain qualities, if not clearly discerned, they are at least *felt*. In one way or another the world understands what substantially they are. The secret element in some manner contributes to form their characters and poise among men, and affect them like hereditary qualities in the flesh and bones. The ancestral taint or excellence is transmitted in some muscle or organ; it lives in some quality of the blood; it comes out in some subtle or complex way, in lineament or expression. Thus all the moral elements of a man's being, thus all the positive vitality of his character, however deep and unsuspected, helps make the man, and is felt in its degree. In some way the secret vice exhales its poison, and the evil passion, however cunningly masked, stains through to the surface.

Or if that which really is in a man does not come out in the very quality and substance of his personality, it is betrayed on certain occasions or in unguarded moments by glimpses and side-lights. This truth is proclaimed in the common saying that no man is a hero to his own familiar servants; to those who are most intimate with his daily foibles and weaknesses. When the compression of public regard is removed, and he walks no longer before the eyes of the world, then all that has been retained appears. There are times, too, when these guards are broken down by surprise; and a word, or a look, makes manifest what was hidden. One lives very respectably until he encounters his particular temptation, and then away goes the respectable fabric of years. The external circumstance brought out what was in him, and what even himself, perhaps, did not suspect. In the disclosure of some great crime, how often are we startled not merely by the revelation of guilt, but by the deeper revelation of the possibility of that guilt hiding itself so long under respectable masks and refined concealments; nay, by the revelation of the possibility that the elements of such guilt may exist unconsciously in a man's own heart, until by some sudden touch of temptation it is crystallized in an overt act. In the time of danger, also, the inherent selfishness of men breaks through all conventionalities, while in moments of stern trial, the features of *reputation* shrivelling away expose the real outlines of *character*. Death is a great revealer of what is in a man, and in its solemn shadow appear the naked lineaments of the soul. With the folds of mortality, then drop




away vanities and majesties, pomps and professions ; nay, often weaknesses and obscurities ; and as the spirit sails away from our sight, it casts upon us a smile of sweet affection, a look of homely virtue, or holy heroism, which is the revelation of a misunderstood and unappreciated life. We know not who has been walking with us and sharing our familiar lot, until just when that one puts on the immortal robes and the heavenly crown.

Old age ought to be, and essentially *is*, a manifestation of what is hidden in the depth of a man's nature. It might be, it should be, not an exhibition of crackling impotence and gloomy decay, but the very crown and ripening of life—the symbol of maturity, not of dissolution. So rich in its resources, so bright in its memories, so calm in the fulness of its harmony, so lifted up by a grand faith, as to over-top all melancholy associations. It is so in the natural world. In the latest hours of the year come out the full glory and richness of the year. I have rode along in this luscious autumn, these days of marvellous beauty, and seen the earth appear like a palette set with gorgeous colors, and encircled with a haze of sifted gold. And the testimony of the season is that of fulness of life and honor, the coronation of a beneficent work, developed through that beautiful process described in the verses succeeding the text, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It seems as though, from every crypt and secret vein, affluent nature had summoned all her riches for one full, glorious manifestation ; and all her hidden beauty swims to the

surface. The buried seed, the dew that came by night, the unregarded sweat of human labor, bursts out in purple grapes and yellow corn. The secret juices of plant and tree tingle in quivering gold and blush in crimson. And every lowly and lovely thing that came and perished long ago has, as it were, left its legacy, and is represented in this congress of yearly glories. The latter spring has bequeathed the color of its sky, the early summer the softness of its breath, and every little flower its peculiar tint, to be woven in this mantle of aërial gauze, and to suffuse the woods with this unconsuming and prismatic flame.

In the latest hours of the year come out the full glory and richness of the year. Why should it not be so with the latest hours of human life? Why should these bear merely a record of waste, and feebleness, and unfulfilled opportunities? Why only dark with regrets and forebodings? Why only wear the look of a ruin, with its broken casements and shattered walls? When old age does present this aspect, is it not a revelation of what has been in the man—of his secret character, and his real life? Surely, a genuine old age, a christian completion of existence, will wear a kind of October glory, even when the body is broken and the flesh is weak. It will correspond with autumn not only as the last but as the richest of the cycle. Then, in clear points of mental flame, in glories of faith, in the beauty of love, every tint of the soul, every gentle and holy affection, all the juices of secret devotion, every process of silent, inner, faithful work, will come out to complete and adorn the life of a man,



and the vestibule of death will be a gate-way of coronation. And then, if not before, that which is hidden in the depths of personal character will be manifested.

II. In the second place, I ask you to consider the law proclaimed in the text as illustrated in the life of *Communities* and *States*. The sanctions of the divine government are not limited to individuals; their circuit is vaster, their processes larger, than the sphere of any personal life, and one man, or one generation, may hardly suspect their operation. But He in whose eternity an ephemera's life-time, or a planet's orbit is equally finite, holds his steady sceptre over all events. A dishonest people is held to its account as strictly as a dishonest man, and events make manifest whatever evil is hidden under its temporal aspects. False institutions which a nation takes to be buttresses of its strength, clog it with weakness and crush it to ruin. In the furrows of unjust conquest and guilty triumphs are sown the seeds of its final dissolution. "Laws which contravene the laws of God are not laws but lies: and like all lies, must perish in the long run." Glorify a lie, legalize a lie, arm and equip a lie, consecrate a lie with solemn forms and awful penalties, and after all it is nothing but a lie. It rots a land and corrupts a people like any other lie, and by and by the white light of God's truth shines clear through it and *shows* it to be a lie. For every nation there has come a time when its hidden falsehood has been made manifest. Then either it must be purified, or it must perish. And if it does perish it falls to pieces because of the weight of falsehood that is in it, and whatever

truth remains it bequeaths to other people. At least so it has been with the great empires of the world. It may be doubted whether a people who deserved to stand—who had not become vitiated by some secret corruption, or some compromise of the truth—have ever been struck from the roll of nations. The hand that wrote Belshazzar's doom in ghostly letters on the wall, recorded there no arbitrary sentence, but was the out-stretched witness of inherent sin. It was not the battle-axe of Goth or Hun that shook the Roman empire until it crumbled, but the corruption within that blasted it at the very core until it was honey-combed with rottenness. There was no sudden novelty, no inexpressible up-rising in the French Revolution. Its most fantastic phenomena were terribly logical. The red-mouthed volcano had long been rumbling under the soil, and in the fiery lava that overwhelmed the altar and the throne might have been descried the strata of centuries of abuse. It was a lie long hidden, made terribly manifest, that perished before the mob of the Bastille, and under the guillotine of Robespierre. And the Revolution in turn was defeated when its practical falsehoods broke through its primary truth.

And this sublime logic runs through the entire chain of human events. All history is but the construction of a syllogism. It is the demonstration of God's control over nations as over you and me. And is there anything more indicative of that control than the processes through which a nation must pass? For a time it may seem to swing clear of moral sanctions—to grow and develop by its felicities of climate and posi-


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tion, by its material resources, and often even then by the positive truth and virtue which it inherits. But by and by some crisis occurs which puts its stability to the proof, and reveals whatever hidden vice it cherishes. The wrong and the right will not work together. Good and evil renew their ancient conflict. Compromises are broken, and bonds of parchment become as tow. The battle may be postponed—it cannot be prevented. There must, for the one or the other, be victory or defeat. The right must assert its abrogated supremacy, or the wrong will usurp its place and corrupt and strangle it. It is no mere work of men or of policies; it is God's own law, that there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested. Sometime in the life of a people, the wrong will show itself as the wrong.

On the other hand, let us recognize the hope and the encouragement which appear in the fact that what there is of evil in a nation's life shall be manifested. It is not necessarily the most terrible crisis when evil is most *apparent*. In that case, it depends upon the fact whether the evil rises up for *conquest*, or rises up for *judgment*—whether it is apparent because it has thoroughly tainted and covered the public life, or because it is seen in a clearer light of the national reason and conscience. An evil may be made manifest because it has actually grown larger, or because we look upon it with purer eyes. In individual instances, we know that they are the best men, not the worst, who are the most conscious of sin. Thus with epochs and communities. There may be no more sin, but there may be a more vivid *consciousness* of it.

Moreover, the manifestation of national evils may be regarded more or less hopefully, in proportion as a nation is in its vigorous youth, or in its decrepitude. When corruption broods in its very heart, and has sunk into all its life—when the entire organism is only a concrete mass of vice, and the more you expose it the more corrupt it seems—that is indeed a terrible manifestation of what has been hidden. But when the evil is incidental to its raw and incomplete state—when it is the effervescence and upheaval of elements that have not yet become settled—then should we be thankful that it is manifested, and hope that in this manifestation it may be arrested and removed.

The application of these remarks to our own condition as a people, is sufficiently obvious. I only ask—did our fathers *mean* what they said when, invoking Providence, they declared the Rights of man, and with their own blood consecrated this new world to be the abode of liberty, the refuge of all nations? Doubtless, good seed was sown in that early time. But has nothing evil, though hidden for a while, been mixed with it? If so, there may come a crisis, there must come a crisis, nay, perhaps there *has* come a crisis, when this question must be answered; when Divine Providence will inquire concerning us—“Did I not sow good seed in this field? Whence then hath it tares?” For the tares will show themselves as well as the wheat, and days of trial are days of revelation. Through the life of nations also runs the Divine, the relentless Law—“There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested.”



III. I remark, finally, that the statement in the text declares the great Law of Providence, working throughout the world. That which is hid shall be made known—the Good, the Evil. How glorious and consoling the thought! There is no Wrong that shall always wear its false triumph, and be covered with specious masks. There is no Right that shall be forever trampled down. Measure not God's plan by the scale of human vision, nor doubt the Beneficence that broods even now behind some vail of mystery. If we confine our attention to a mere segment of space or time, the universe may seem to us ungoverned. If from the great chain we sever this or that special fact, it may seem *mis*-governed. A single leaf of the rocky book beneath our feet, conveys a very different impression from the entire volume of the globe. To a zoöphyte nature, to a saurian consciousness, the destruction of its particular epoch may have told a different story from that which, in the light of geological science, we read in the rounded whole. Temporary losses, mortal ills,—do they of themselves furnish the key to God's great Plan, or will they not read far differently looked upon from the immortal world, in the light of His completed Process?

My brethren, are there indeed inexplicable evils in this world? Are there mysteries which sorely try our faith? Remember, God shows us no finished system, but is now and always working. "There is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested." Let this be our assurance. Let it be *your* assurance, son or daughter of sorrow, in the midst of your tribulation. Believe

this, ye whom public evils fill with doubt and dread. Is there anything more inspiring than the thought that what we see is but a very little portion of what really *is*? Are we not thankful that so much is indeed hidden—so much from which light will yet undoubtedly stream—and that even all the excellence we behold, is a small thing compared with the glory yet to be revealed? Oh! if what we see *were* indeed all that actually is—if this path of trial made up the entire scope of our being, and that wall of graves were the boundary line, then indeed how often should we droop and despair!

How much of our hope and our strength comes from this fact, that “there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested!” How grand the thought that existence is both a mystery and a perpetual Revelation—that it is like the beautiful process, already alluded to, of “the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear.” Nay, we ought to be thankful for this Law of manifestation even in respect to our most secret sins. Let us be thankful that there is that which probes them, which stirs them up in their dark concealments, which reveals and which punishes them. We ought to be glad that it is so in public affairs. Better to see the evil and face it, and so get rid of it, than to deny it, and dodge it, and attempt to cover it up.

And let us rejoice, I say, once more, because there is withal so much of joy and beauty and goodness yet to be made known. In the light of this fact the patriot can endure, the philanthropist toil, and the sufferer for conscience’ sake, even as of old, lay down his

very life. So the mother parts with her babe. So the dearest relationships can be surrendered. So we can look upon this mystery and shadow of death not as a final limit, but as a wondrous vail behind which brood things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath the heart of man conceived. So we can lift its darkened folds and pass beyond. So we can do our work and bear our lot in the world. For, knowing that "there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested," there is inspiration for our action, there is assurance for our peace.

IV.

Changes in Life.

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”—LUKE X. 31.

THE story of the Good Samaritan not only furnishes a direct answer to the Lawyer's question, “Who is my neighbor,” but unfolds in a large degree the very essence and peculiarity of the Christian religion. Thus, there is not only illustrated that noble truth, which even a heathen poet might utter, that all men are kindred, and no one is foreign to any other, but how is that truth in the narrative before us intensified and consecrated by that profounder interpretation which it has received only from the cross of Christ! For here it appears, that not only are the claims of our common nature to be answered under ordinary conditions of sympathy, but the most stubborn prejudices must melt away before the Supreme Law of Love, and even an enemy is to be blest.

You will observe that in the representation of our Saviour, it was not only a man rendering assistance to a suffering fellow-man, but as seems likely a Samaritan succoring a Jew. Or if the nationality of the abused

wayfarer is not clear, the generous benefactor in the case was at least one whom the very lawyer who put the question held in abhorrence. And thus is revealed the spirit of that Universal Religion which oversweeps all external distinctions between men, and shatters the middle walls of partition.

Another feature of our religion brought out in this narrative, exhibits it as a Religion of the Spirit, and not of the mere Letter. It shows the superiority of love and kindly ministration over all lip-service and ceremonial punctiliousness. We cannot doubt which was the sacrifice most acceptable to God—which was the core and essence of all genuine faith and worship—the legal performance that the priest might accomplish, or the human help which the Samaritan bestowed.

In this comprehensive narrative which fell from the lips of Jesus, we catch the suggestion of his religion as a Religion of Principle—not a religion only of *times* and *places*, not a religion coming smooth up to the requirement of what was written, and there ceasing to act and to live—an arbitrary and mercantile religion, so much done for so much received—a percentage or tax paid for a policy of insurance made good in Heaven—but a religion of vital goodness, always flowing in its own spontaneous abundance, and leaping forward to fill every opportunity. A religion associated not only with the Temple and the Sabbath, but with the week-day journey and the beaten road, and humanity wounded and bleeding by the wayside. The priest's religion might be ready for the set season

and the established form, but it was not ready for the sudden and pregnant *Chance*. And this last remark suggests the particular use which I propose to make of the language of the text in connection with the narrative before us.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side."

"Chances in Life, and how we should meet them," will be the subject of my present discourse. And the first thing to be considered is the idea which this word *Chance* itself suggests to us. In the present discourse we may regard it as presenting a two-fold definition. We may speak of it as indicating an Occurrence, and as indicating an Opportunity.

For the purpose of right thought, however, in the action of daily life, it is well to ask in the outset for a more comprehensive definition than that which has just been given. It is well to ask whether there is any such thing as *Chance*, in the common acceptance of that term. I say "common acceptance," and yet it might be difficult to define what it is that is commonly accepted.

When we speak of "Chances," surely we do not mean that anything in this universe is absolutely fortuitous. Things occur without human foresight, but is there anything that occurs without foresight somewhere. Nay, we must be cautious how, in using this term, we limit the field of human responsibility and control. That thing which has come about by chance—that thing which has *happened* to you—is

it positively without any agency of your own? That turn of ill-fortune, that stroke of disease which may come upon you, that position of temptation and of peril in which at any time you have been placed—are you sure that you had no hand in producing it—that you might not have prevented or modified it? Ah! how much in this world is charged to chance or fortune, or veiled under a more devout name, and accorded to Providence, while, when we come to look honestly into affairs, we find it to be a debt of our own accumulation, and one which we must inevitably pay.

It is all Chance, is it, that the rushing car plunges from the track, or the rotten bridge breaks under the loaded train, or the worn-out boiler explodes and slays its hundreds? Is it indeed a chance beyond the skill of the watchful eye, the steady hand, the sober brain, the honest heart? How dare reckless indifference, or greedy monopoly, look upon these windrows of mangled and bleeding men, and call them "Victims of Chance?" How dare any man reckon up the sum of prodigality, or idleness, or vice, and bemoan his fate as a poor tool of circumstances, a shuttlecock of fortune?

Let us be cautious, I say, what we mean by this word *Chance*, and whether we understand it as something that is beyond even human control. Let us split open, throw away and turn out of doors the miserable fallacy that "Life is a Game of Chance." Even if things around you *were* all chance-directed, and hurled at you by the hands of a blind, invisible fate; even though you floated in the whirlpool of savage necessity, what are *you*—what is the mind within you, that it,

too, should be tossed and washed about as if it were only a chance-product also? Are you not conscious of an element within you that can cling to its purpose, and maintain its integrity, and be sublimely victorious over all circumstances?

But, doubtless, things do occur beyond all human control, at least far beyond that point where we can trace the outlines of our own immediate agency. It was by Chance, so far as the priest in the narrative was concerned, that the poor stranger lay stripped and bruised in his way. But in all that vast region of mystery that stretches beyond the sphere of man's agency, beyond the sphere of his knowledge and discernment—in all this universe, there is no such thing as mere Chance. There is no such thing as accident. We begin to acknowledge this—to set it down as a fixed and solid axiom in the material world. There is no break of order, not the least slip or cranny there. Not a hair falls without a law, not a sparrow really *wanders* in its flight, not a winged seed is blown by unguided winds. Every demonstration of science refutes this conception of Chance, and routes it from its lurking-place among these forms and forces. Through every rift of discovery some seeming anomaly drops out of the darkness, and falls as a golden link in the great chain of order. The electric spark, apparently so capricious, darting in the sudden lightning, and playing in fearful mystery, reveals at length its regular and beautiful laws, and becomes pliant to the human hands that are weaving with its subtle threads a web of world-wide harmony. The comet, so strange, so

fearful, rushing with such a sweep through space, and hanging over us in the night-sky like a blazing scimitar, in its far, trackless journey measuring the life-time of our generations, moves by the beat of the clock, and fulfils its cycle as obediently as a rain-drop or a flower. Oh! in all the realm of nature, there is no such thing as Chance—no accident.

And yet, there are men to whom this entire system of things seems but the offspring of Chance, and who quote this silent, unbroken regularity as a proof of their interpretation. "Give me," said one of these, "enough letters of the Greek alphabet, and an infinite number of throws, and I will agree to throw the *Iliad* of Homer"—as if Chance could have produced, or could sustain this vast array of order, in which no Chance ever again appears.

Is it not a matter of wonder that any man can look upon this exquisite arrangement, this great and ever-unfolding scheme of harmony, without a jar in all its million wheels, and fail to recognize the controlling presence of an All-upholding, All-pervading Mind? But if it is thus the tendency of investigation to eliminate Chance from the entire domain of the natural world, may we not believe that even in those conditions of human life where we refer to it, it is only a convenient term to hide our ignorance—just as the phrases "Laws of Nature," "gravitation," "electricity," are convenient names for what we do not know? Surely we may conclude that those occurrences which we describe by this word "Chance," belong at least to a moral system whose relation we cannot now fully

discern, but where all is purpose and order, as certainly as in the material universe. We see there how many things seem fortuitous until they are interpreted by some large array of facts, or by some comprehensive law.

And so, *life's* chances, if they betray no other feature of regularity, at least reveal this much : they show themselves ranged in connection with our *spiritual discipline*. There is nothing that occurs to us in our daily existence, not even in the smallest transaction, that is not a source of moral inspiration, and does not furnish occasion for moral effort. And this conclusion brings me to the second head of this discourse—to the consideration of the Chances of Life, not merely as *occurrences* but as *opportunities*.

That was the manner in which the priest may have regarded his encounter with the forlorn stranger at the roadside. "By *chance* he came down that way," and he may have accepted that Chance merely as an *occurrence*, and passed by on the other side, to forget it as suddenly as it had happened to him. What was the fact of a man stripped by robbers and left in the road, in proportion to the work he had to do ! What was the possibility of making an unfortunate creature more comfortable, in comparison with the dignity of his office ! What was the task of binding up wounds, pouring in oil and wine, to the service of the Temple and the duties of the ministry ! So it is that men, limiting the demands of duty to set occasions, limiting their conception of religion to a round of ceremonies, in the things that come by chance recognize nothing

but an Occurrence, and neglect an Opportunity. So it is that one ordained to be a minister of Christ contracts into a *priest*, giving expression only to set forms and phrases, and uttering no fresh, free words for the way-side realities of life, the interests of the broad world, for trampled Right, and the image of the Creator desecrated in bruised and bleeding man. So the church of the living God, moving so stately on, fierce against heresies, and launching its rebukes at sin in general, passes by on the other side, leaving crushed humanity to pine and perish, were it not for some unconsecrated Samaritan who brings the bandages and pours the oil and wine. Oh ! embodiment of Divine truth and power on earth, claiming the *work* of Christ—do not merely speak his words, do not be merely the body of Jesus, but pray and strive for more of his spirit. Bear with you not only the ecclesiastical utensils, but the anointing humanities ; widen your grasp, enlarge your efforts ; take in the present needs, the living claims ; in homes of poverty, in dens of shame, in prisons and slave-shambles, proceed to do the church's work of serving and honoring Christ, or hear him say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

In coming down by chance that way, the priest found only an Occurrence, and neglected a glorious Opportunity. My friends, how is it with ourselves ? How do we meet the chances which occur to us in life ? I ask you, is it not true that they unfold some of our noblest opportunities ? "Man devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Every morning we may lay

our course, but every day we drift in currents of Providence, that bring us into unexpected contacts. In unknown events our virtue is tried, our souls summoned to their possibilities, and uncalculated things break in upon us, and present the touchstone of character. We pray "O Lord, lead us not into temptation," but when and where shall we claim the answer? Just in the time we set? Just in the way we foresaw? Will it make its deliberate proposition, and we be all panoplied in adamantine virtue, ready to meet and repel it? Or, will it come by Chance, and trip us in an instant? Will it be exactly the sin we expect by which to-day we may fall? and will it look to us as we thought it would? Or, will it be masked in some chance device that will disguise it until it is too late? The devil has been painted swarthy, cloven-footed, horned, and hideous. Do we expect to see him in that shape? Oh, surely it would be better for us, if he *did* come in that shape! The trouble is, the devil never does come in that shape. He comes by Chance, with unregistered signals, and in all sorts of counterfeit presentments.

We may have virtue enough — religion enough — for set-times and Sundays. Have we enough for this crowded, thick-swarming, busy, every-day world? The great test of principle is to be ready for chances — never to be taken *unawares*. Here are the pitfalls of vast ruin, opening suddenly by the way. In this world, wicked as it is, what is the proportion of those, think you, who have sat down and planned, and pondered, and firmly resolved on their evil schemes,

as compared with those who have fallen *suddenly* into sin? Does it not make you tremble to think how in this very city there are so many of the young who are in danger, who are in *great* danger; because, while they may have an educated respect for rectitude—a general stock—too often, alas! mere *fancy* stock—of good principles—they have nothing to keep them from being taken by Chance? For it is by Chance they are taken; it is by Chance the tempting word is spoken; by Chance the game, the glass, the wile of harlotry is displayed.

Ask yonder fool of appetite—the poor, degraded drunkard—if he set out for that? Was it for that he left his quiet country home, and his old mother, whose poor heart was put to rest long ago? Was it for that he put forth every aspiration in his first struggle of life? No! It was Chance that tripped him. Think you that if he could have seen it all, circling in the ruby coloring of the first glass, he would not have dashed it from him like a serpent? But it was Chance that moved him, and over that Chance he has stumbled into ruin.

Once more I ask you, are you aware of the opportunities for sin that lurk in Chance? Are you ready for them? For there is the test of a man. Some one has said, that what one mutters in his dreams will betray his inner life, and show what he really is. But dreams come from a multitude of cares, and may after all only indicate what has been pressing on the surface of a man's nature. But see how a man behaves himself in little daily instances, in the common intercourse

of life, away from the church—away from the foreseen occasions, when Chance leaps upon him and solicits him for good or for evil. Many a man who might walk over burning plough-shares into heaven, stumbles from the path because there is gravel in his shoes. Little irritations may ruffle and inflame a spirit that would keep serene in the front of great injuries. The temptation is not here where you are reading about it or praying about it. It is down in your shop among bales and boxes, ten-penny nails and sand-paper. Take, for instance, a single principle, and try its depth and substance. What kind of benevolence and love to your fellow-men have you? Is it a Sabbath-day and subscription benevolence, a charity sermon and linen cambric benevolence? Or does it always sit in the door-way of your heart, like the compassion of the merciful Jesus, ready for bleeding, appealing, suffering humanity right by the wayside?

Perhaps the priest in the narrative was a charitable man after his kind, and had laid up as he thought a good deal of treasure in heaven, while it could not be found that he had scattered any on earth; but “by Chance he came down that way” where the poor groaning traveller lay, “and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

But let us not consider merely the occasions for wrong-doing, for failure or neglect, that spring upon us in the Chances of life—let us realize also the grandeur and fullness of such opportunities.

How many of the best things come by Chance. Let a man only resolve to be true at all times, and can he

calculate the effect of his loyalty at any time? How often do we "build wiser than we know." Striking for the occasion, for the immediate truth or duty of the hour, men have struck for all ages. It is God's work we do whenever we perform the right thing, let what will oppose itself; and who can limit the uses which God thus makes of His instruments? He does not require great things to effect His great ends; not always a battle or a treaty, a mission or a martyrdom. Your little act of faith and fortitude, He may take it up and weave it conspicuously among the splendors of His unfolding plan. The kind word you have spoken, the honest advice you gave, the helping hand you have stretched out to lift up the wayfarer, who shall measure or limit its widening circle on the waves of spiritual influence—on the sea of time?

But this is not the motive that is to determine your action. It is enough for you, at any day or hour, that the chance demands it and the thing is right and good. Oh! let us not wait for great occasions, or act for ostentatious ends. Take the chance that occurs, and make the most and best of it.

"Only give me a chance," I think I hear somebody say, "and I will do this thing or that." Ah! it is not the great occasion, but the great spirit that crowns and glorifies our work. And this we may have in any condition. Therefore do not stand whining and prophesying. You have your chance such as it is. If it is cramped and adverse, so much the grander is any worthy achievement that may come of it. If it does not give you an opportunity to do much of anything

else, it gives you an opportunity to be loyal to God, and to the spirit that is in you. No condition is unfavorable to virtue—where virtue is. If you cannot do anything else in your condition, you can at least by your faith and patience live there and *be* there, and by your faith and patience all the more nobly live and be—or in God's appointed way you can die there, more truly to live. The best men are not those who have waited for chances—but taken them, besieged the chance, conquered the chance, and made the chance their servitor. It is not instruments God is engaged in fabricating in this world ; it is not steam engines or electric telegraphs, or high stages of civilization. It is men. It is not splendors, principalities and powers that mark the grades of being and determine the footprints of progress—it is the Mind, the soul of man. Wherever that lives, wherever that acts, there is a Chance, there is an opportunity, and the great thing is not what we find in life, but what we do in it and bring out of it. And while we are waiting for great chances to come we may be doing injustice to the chances that are. You do not know how rich your chance may be until you try it. There high upon the bank rests a plain, uninteresting stone. The cottager before whose door it sleeps has seen it year after year all his lifetime, and yet it has been nothing to him but a plain block of stone. By and by there comes a philosopher—a clear seer into things. He examines it, and on every side, without and within, finds it to be a book of revelation, containing vast cycles and histories of God's working. It enfolds the relics of

long-perished life. He hears in it, as it were, the wash of pre-Adamite seas and the murmur of primeval woods. It is all instinct with pictured movement and glorious forms of Divine order and beauty. All this he finds in the common and homely stone. Your condition, my friend, may be as uninteresting and as barren as the boulder of sand-stone by the road-side, but do not neglect its opportunities. Look into them, search them, see what God has planted therein. Young man! when you step upon the threshold of life, take your Chance and do nobly with it. Poverty-smitten man, borne down by calamity! there is much chance in your condition; there is a chance to trust, a chance to pray, a chance to rise sublimely over every spiritual obstacle and be a conqueror. In sickness, in weakness, on the verge of the grave, still there is your chance,—a chance to be, a chance to endure, to trust, to grow upward in unfolding and aspiring truth and nobleness.

My hearers, here is the way to be religious, and to manifest our religion. It is to take the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of faith and love, and with its active operation fill up all chances as they come. The difficulty with men is, not that they are resolved not to be religious, but they are waiting for the Chance to become so. Day after day comes and departs, and yet they are still undecided because their Chance has not arrived. To be religious, you must be religious now in the work that calls upon you this instant. Again, others are waiting for a set opportunity to exercise their religion—they want special times, places, limits, for it. This is all well if they do not confine their re-

ligion too closely. Some men exercise their religion for a little while in the morning, or in the evening; walk it out for a few moments and let it take the air, or give it a turn on Sundays; but this is all. What an emaciated, dyspeptic, valetudinarian sort of religion is this! This great gospel is not a cramped, feeble, narrow thing of times and seasons, but wherever God can be worshipped or humanity be served, or the spirit of love manifested, there is the work of true religion. And what glorious opportunities there are for thus serving our God in the every-day intercourse of the world! What opportunities for communing with Him in his infinite mercy, and feeling the hem of his garment in His daily providence! What an opportunity for seeing Him in the great Temple of Nature where all is loveliness and sublimity, and his glorious works above and around look down upon you, bearing the impress of the Father's face. These are but the chances of a single day; but how numerous and how pregnant would they become if we would but set our hearts upon their discovery.

Yes, even here in this house to-night you have your Chance. How many have entered here by Chance—or if they have come with set purpose, the Word which has met them here, not foreknown, has met them by Chance. Not my poor, fallible words, but the suggestions of this lesson which fell from the lips of Christ. And this is a Chance that will be neglected or used. You will cast from you the teachings of the hour as you go from this house, or you will treasure them up, and make them an element in your deepest

life. The priest in the narrative neglected *his* opportunity. And we know how rich and great an opportunity it was. Do not neglect yours. Neglect not this nor any Chance of good in life. For through the doors of Chance, we pass into illimitable consequences.

V.

Divine Providence.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

MATTHEW VI. 26.

THERE are certain problems which can have only a practical solution. They must rest finally upon the decision of common sense. We cannot hold them in any consistent theory. We cannot disentangle them by any metaphysical analysis. But the moment we adopt our spontaneous convictions, and act simply as we feel, there is no real difficulty in the way. Men have fallen into error by thinking too much, as well as by thinking too little. They have over-reasoned and over-refined, and, without any satisfactory result, beat about in that uncertain sea of speculation which limits and exceeds all thought.

In the meantime they have *acted*, in respect to those very questions, as upon grounds of the utmost assurance. For instance, there is the old question with

which philosophers have puzzled themselves and others, from time immemorial,—the question whether there is any real, substantial world external to ourselves, or whether it is not all a phantasm of our own minds.

It is extremely difficult, by formulas of logic or metaphysics, to prove that there *is*,—difficult to find the bridge which shall connect and authenticate the two facts; and yet no man is troubled with doubts upon this subject in his conduct. He lives and moves with reference to a world without, as well as to himself, and feels it to be a fact coördinate with his own consciousness.

So is it with the great truth proclaimed in the text—the truth of a Divine Providence. If you look at it simply as a theory, and consider all its relations, there is perplexity in it: it springs a problem which no reasoning of ours can ever settle. But every man, unless he is that rare thing an absolute atheist, in one form or another believes this doctrine of a Providence,—*feels* it to be true,—*acts* as if it were true. When he sets himself down in a sharp, metaphysical mood, he is perplexed by queries respecting *general* and *special* Providence, or by the apparent antagonism between the Divine Sovereignty and human free-will. And yet, who does not hear these words of the Saviour with glad consent of heart—perceiving that, in the truth of this declaration, the universe is bright and harmonious, and that, if it were not true, all would be dark indeed? Who does not find his deepest convictions responding to this appeal: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap,

nor gather into barns ; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?”

If one wants merely to give his intellect gymnastic exercise, and train it to feats of agility, he may speculate upon the questions *How?* and *Why?* which this doctrine of a Divine Providence opens up ; but if he wants sanction for conduct, or incentive for effort, or comfort in trouble, he draws back from these abstractions, and applies his common sense, not to cause, but to phenomena—to the practical facts as they stand before him.

Thus, for instance, there is no practical difficulty between “special” and “general” in that conception of Providence which we feel to be true. We know but little of the Divine Method, but still we can believe that God works for general ends, and yet works specifically ; directs His tender care and love upon you and me. We can believe that He works by law, with stupendous regularity, and yet can touch all the issues of our humanity—can succor its weakness, direct its forth-goings, and answer its prayers—even as He moves planets and systems in their orbits, and at the same time feeds the little wild-bird in its nest.

Thus, too, while we hold the doctrine of a Providence that overrules all things, we escape the sweeping result of Fatalism. Of course, such a doctrine of Providence is identical with the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. How can God provide for all issues, if He does not foresee them ? and what if He did foresee them, if He had not final control over them ? If some unforeseen contingency should occur—if some ungov-

ernable agent should slip in, the universe might lose its balance, the sparrow might lose its food. In any consistent conception of Providence, the band of Divine Sovereignty must stretch around all the oscillations of matter, and all the movements of mind.

But then, what becomes of man's free-agency? If God has this foresight and omnipotence, how am I to blame for sin? How can I help it? May I not silence the rebuke of conscience, and throw the responsibility upon the Deity, and so draw immoral comfort from the doctrine?

Now, I say, we may speculate here until the end of our days, and gain nothing tangible in this way; but the practical answer is in our own consciousness. *That* assures us of our freedom just as clearly as we are convinced of the Divine Sovereignty.

In the last analysis, we know nothing about God except through qualities existing in ourselves. Nature and Revelation make Him known to us, but they appeal to something within us kindred to the attributes which they declare. If we had no conception of origination and construction in our own experience, we could not appreciate the argument for design so irresistibly forced upon us now, wherever we turn our eyes. If we had no sympathies, we should know nothing about God's love. If we had no moral nature, we could not comprehend His justice. How, then, do we get a conception of the Divine Freedom, unless we have a consciousness of freedom in our own nature? We may say that He is infinite, and we are finite; but that distinction pertains to degree, not to kind. Our intel-

ligence is finite, and our love, and our justice ; but still it *is* intelligence, love, justice, kindred to the Divine. So our freedom is the freedom of finite beings ; but still it *is* freedom, and involves the responsibilities of freedom—involves choice, and duty, and blame for wrong-doing.

Our consciousness of free-will in ourselves, I say then, enables us to comprehend the fact of freedom in the Divine nature ; and this very consciousness stands before any theorizing that might lead to a mere fatalism, and forces us to acknowledge our moral responsibility. No matter what we may *say* about the Divine control, every man *knows* that he is free to act right or wrong, and feels himself to blame when he takes the latter alternative. And, I say, while this simple fact of consciousness may not clear up the perplexity which the merely speculative intellect finds in endeavoring to reconcile Divine Sovereignty with human free-agency, it is the common-sense key which unlocks the door of practical action.

How does this doctrine of Providence affect you, and me, and everybody ? Do we feel that it encourages wickedness, and justifies sin ? The Saviour proclaims this beautiful truth—that God feeds the birds of the air, and numbers the hairs of our heads ; and we feel that He pervades all things, upholds all things, leads all forward in His own sublime plan. But, as the thought rushes upon us, as we ponder it, and let it beam in upon the mysterious passages of our life, does it seem to inspire us with the desire of wrong-doing ? Does it seem to give license to the same ? No : I

undertake to say, there never was a man who entered into the *spirit* of the text, and felt like applying the doctrine which it contains to a wrong purpose.

No man ever felt as a sinner, in his sin, like appealing to it as a *sanction* for his sin. The bad man is conscious of this fact of a Providence working in all things, but he is conscious of it as a fact working not *for* him, but *against* him—a serene benignity with which the current of his life does not run parallel ; a pervading Presence that startles him with its searching inspection ; an adjusting process that never overlooks the wrong. The murderer, in his discharge of passion, or his lust of malice, does not rest comfortably on this doctrine of Divine Providence ; nor the thief in his secrecy , nor the libertine in his plot ; nor the usurper on the throne. The tide of Divine Sovereignty is, in his experience, a head-tide. It flows against him, not with him. God is an uncomfortable thought to him. He had rather there were none. Atheism, chance, a dead world-machinery without plan, without vindication, suits a bad man much better than the beautiful truth which Jesus illustrated by the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field.

You perceive, then, how our practical consciousness holds to the doctrine proclaimed in the text, and at the same time escapes those perplexities which occur to the merely speculative intellect. Our consciousness, I say, holds this doctrine of Divine Providence. It is the spontaneous conviction of almost every man—the conviction not only that there is a God, but one who cares for us, who sustains us, who ministers unto us

continually. One who has a plan, and carries it surely forward ; whose purpose the great universe fulfils, running on golden wheels ; in whose embrace is gathered up each individual life ; whose intention unfolds in the steady beat of universal law, in the falling of a leaf, and of a hair ; to whom we may confidently lift the appeal of our sorrow and our hope ; upon whom we may patiently rely ; but who rebukes our indolence, and from whom, in our guilt, we shrink in terror and in shame. Deeper than our theories and our disputes, is an intuitive faith that responds to the teaching of Jesus : " Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? "

Having thus seen how profoundly in our conviction this doctrine of Divine Providence is fixed, let us consider some of the indications without us which confirm its truth.

The most apparent of these—the grandest scale on which the operation of a Providence appears—is the entire system of the natural world. It is true that here is the field from which, in theory, many seem to exclude the notion of a Providence. They speak of Nature as a stupendous machine, wound up and running by its own vitality—an automaton, which, by a kind of clock-work, simulates a life and an intelligence that are really absent from it. Or, if they do not deny the operation of a Divine Providence, they refer to what are termed " the laws of nature," in such

a manner as to shut off the immediate agency of God.


But what is a law of nature, except a fixed way in which the Creator works? The finest element that the chemist can detect; the subtile, immaterial force, whatever it may be,—is not *the law*, but merely an *expression* of the law. And in the last analysis, we cannot separate law from the operation of intelligent will. I do not say that God acts only through nature, or that God is identical with nature; but in a profound sense it is true that Nature is Providence. God, who in essence is distinct from His works, is perpetually in His works. And so every night and every day His Providence is illustrated before us. His beneficence streams out from the morning sun, and His love looks down upon us from the starry eyes of midnight. It is His solicitude that wraps us in the air, and the pressure of His hand, so to speak, that keeps our pulses beating. Oh! it is a great thing to realize that the Divine Power is always working; that nature, in every valve and every artery, is full of the Presence of God. It is a great thing to conceive of Providence as both General and Special, comprehending immensity in its plan, yet sustaining the frailest filament of being and elaborating the humblest form.

Take up, as much as you can, in your imagination, the great circle of existence. How wide its sweep! how immeasurable its currents! And are there some who tell us that God cares only for the grand whole, and has no regard for details—that this is beneath the majesty of His nature, the dignity of His scheme?

I say, again, that Nature is Providence ; and this tells us a different story. For it is full of minute ministrations, as though the Divine solicitude were concentrated upon the insect or the worm—so that whatever thing you observe, it seems as though the universe were constructed and arranged for *that* alone. And the sublimities of God's glory beam upon us in His care for the little, as well as in His adjustments of the great ; in the comfort which surrounds the little wood-bird, and blesses the denizen of a single leaf, as well as in the happiness that streams through the hierarchies of being that cluster and swarm in yon forests of the firmament ; in the skill displayed in the spider's eye, in the beauty that quivers upon the butterfly's wing, as in the splendors that emboss the chariot wheels of night, or glitter in the sandals of the morning.

It may be said, "All this is done by law ;" but, I say again, law cannot be separated from intelligent will. Nature is God perpetually working, and we need only look around us to see and to feel that truth of a Providence to which our deepest instincts turn.

But the proof of a Divine Providence is also unfolded in the History of Humanity. Leaving out of view all the claims of a supernatural Revelation, and taking up the course of things through the ages simply from the stand-point of science, it all bears evidence of a *plan*. Perhaps we are not competent to say what kind of a plan, nor exactly what purpose it fulfils. Our experience is too short to span the arc of God's intention. And yet we see enough to detect the harmony, method, coöperation of agencies ; enough



to feel assured that History is not a chaos of fortuitous revolutions and whirling nationalities. Every move on the great chess-board of the globe has been calculated, and the minute and the remote has had linear connection with the vast and the present.

It is beautiful to see events simple, fragmentary, extemporaneous, anomalous, starting up in different quarters of the horizon, falling into symmetry, and coalescing at last with the great whole. Now it is an expedition of adventure carelessly strolling over the world. Now it is a cloud of conquest looming like a dim speck in the sky. Now it is the fiery words of a Prophet, flung like coals upon a people's heart. Now it is a king's lust, or a woman's quarrel. Now it is a little colony pitched from wave to wave. But see how the invisible shuttle weaves it all, woof and warp, into a consistent plan! See how one influence catches into another, and the falsehoods are sifted, and the truths survive! See how the life of one people is poured into the life of another, and defeat becomes victory, and destruction turns out to be growth; and, without being able to mark any sharp transition, a change comes over the face of the ages, beautiful, mysterious, full of inward spirit—like that which comes over a human face, passing from youth to maturity! We do not know exactly how the old Wrong crumbles away, how the contested Right passes into quiet sovereignty; but somehow "the leaven leavens the lump." We cannot safely predicate progress in our own little span of time. To some wise men, there may seem to be decline and retrogression;

but when we measure by one of God's days—one of those days which are a thousand years—there can be no doubt about "progress." The sea-mark is evidently higher. The world is better. The prophet has not spoken, the hero has not fought, the martyr has not died, in vain. Evidently in the course of humanity, as in the course of nature, there is a plan. History also is Providence; and we may believe that the most insignificant thing, something apparently of no more importance in the great economy than the wild bird's food, is marked, and overruled, and made to do its work.

And, whether it be on the general plain of history, or in narrower fields of observation, who has not marked the final triumph of the right, the good, the true,—a prevalent justice; a curve of limitation in which all oscillations are rectified? Tell me what bad man stands triumphant through the ages? What hypocrite wears always his silken robes? What sham reputation, that, with the rust and the weather-stains, does not show the tinsel and the brass? What fine gold that does not come out pure? What jewel that does not sparkle at the last? Did a truth ever die? Did a falsehood ever live? Did a wrong, sheathed in parchment, propped up with bayonets, strung with a million sinews, ever continue without being sapped and mined and thrown off, as an intolerable burden, by the popular heart?

Each of you can best tell what has marked his individual life—how often he has been evidently *led*, he knew not why. In what singular positions he has been placed, and what mysterious implication, leading

to momentous consequences, has blended with his own will! But certainly, wherever we look, nothing is more evident than the truth of a Providence—a power above us, interested in us, overruling all. Events, things, world-movements, individual experiences, contemplated from a partial point of view, may seem chaotic, purposeless, disconnected, like the foam-flakes, pitching, whirling, turned into mist, bounding into white annihilation, at Niagara. But every atom of that dishevelled water is held in the curve of nature, and descends by law, and combines, and sweeps onward to the broad lake. So with human events: They are governed; they accomplish a majestic course; and over their maddest plunging, their most terrible anarchy, there arches the superintending Providence—a bow in the cloud.

Having thus considered the spontaneous faith in a Divine Providence which exists in the human heart, and the confirmations of that doctrine which appear in different spheres, let us, finally, inquire what are the moral results of this belief—what are the tendency and the efficacy of it?

I have already shown you that this conception of a Providence is a very different thing from Fatalism—that it does not favor indolence nor encourage sin. Indeed, a consoling faith in this truth is one of those blessings which are added unto us, we having sought first the kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness of God. No sane man dares look up from his unplanted field, and ask God to give him a harvest, or to bless him in and for his sins.

The conviction of a Divine Providence springs up eminently in a religious soul—the soul of a man who has done all that he can, and the best he can ; and it springs up in a two-fold conception—the conception of a Power working with our agency, and that of a Power working beyond our agency. The first we can be conscious of, only in endeavoring after the right and the good ; otherwise we feel that we have no alliance with Providence—feel that it is working against us. And, in the next place, we can become aware of a Power working beyond our agency, only by pushing our agency to its utmost. The first of these conceptions, therefore, is incompatible with wilful sin, and the second with indolence ; and the doctrine of the text forbids any immoral conclusion.

But I observe, in the first place, that this doctrine of Divine Providence is a source of *cheerful inspiration*. There are two methods of religious improvement. The one is attained by looking into ourselves—by considering our deficiencies and our sins, by probing our affections, and uncovering our secret motives. The other is by looking away from ourselves—from our own narrow sphere of experience and action—to the Divine character and agency. Each of these methods must have its turn, if we would secure an earnest and healthful religious development.

There are some who err by contemplating the Divine action only. Their theology consists in an exposition of what God is going to do. Their religion is comprised in the sentiment of resignation and trust. It is needful that these should awake to a con-

viction of what man must do—to a sense of sin, and duty, and personal responsibility.

But, on the other hand, men have a morbid tendency to introspection. He pares away the roots of motive and affection, until their piety becomes sickly, and their entire nature over-sensitive. And for such as these it is well to present the great truth of Divine Providence—to feel that all our agency merges into the scope of infinite wisdom, love and power—that the destiny of the world is not poised upon our individual decision ; but, like the law that majestically carries our globe through space, we are embosomed, and uplifted, and borne along by an Unchangeable and Illimitable Goodness.

Again : This doctrine of Divine Providence is a doctrine of *strength and victory*. The man who actually believes it, and affiliates with it, has overcome the world. Let events play as they will, he is on the winning side. He is stronger than public opinion, stronger than institutions, stronger than death. In the tenth chapter of this Gospel of Matthew, this doctrine of Providence is reiterated, in connection with a prediction of the toils and the persecutions which should fall to the lot of the early disciples of Jesus: How it must have animated them ! and how this same grand truth has animated others in all ages since ! How many struggling spirits, how many depressed and tempted natures, have drawn courage, yea, omnipotence, from those simple words: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. . . Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

And, surely, I need not speak of the *consolations* which flow from this doctrine of Divine Providence. How could we live without it? Is there any man so strong, so girt about with prosperity, so imperturbably happy, that he never feels the need of believing in some great, kind Power that carries us on through this mystery and perplexity, and will make all right?

For my part, when I think what Life *is*—in a large degree bright, beautiful, joyous; and yet when I think what mingles with it, what *does* come, and *must* come, —I am thankful for every revelation of Science, that shows our world (in which are bound up so much sin and so much care) as a little orb linked in a grand system of relations, and carried through immensities of space.

But especially am I thankful for every confirmation of these suggestions that fell from the lips of Jesus, and that he has so clearly taught us that Providence is not only *general*, unfolding in the majestic movement of natural laws, but *special*, numbering the very hairs of our heads.

Is there any man so strong that he never needs this truth—so satisfied that he never looks out for it? Are there not times when the distracted brain, and the saddened soul, can feel that this faith lifts them up into a broad, serene light, while sorrow and trial are forgotten, and the garment of heaviness drops away? Are there not issues in life, when the heart of the stoutest and the most confident comes throbbing like a child's heart, and lulls itself to rest on this beautiful fact of Providence?

It is *not* when we lean back in guilty indolence, or timid distrust, that we can claim the help of a Providence: It is not then that we can discern that there *is* a Providence at all. On the other hand, those who have been characterized by adherence to this truth, have always been the strongest *workers*.

And *we*, working like them in the confidence of a childlike trust,—like them also entangled in those darker issues of Life,—may rejoice to catch the suggestion of the Saviour, as the poet has done—tracing the flight of the wild bird, that has been made for us a symbol of God's universal Care:

“He who, from zone to zone,
Guides thro’ the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way which I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.”

VI.

Growth and Advancement.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

JOHN XII. 24.

THIS is one of those passages of the New Testament which indicate that between the natural and the moral world, there is, in the inmost mystery of their working, not merely a resemblance, but a *correspondence*. From this correspondence, in the instance before us, Christ illustrates His own personal history.

It appears to have been our Saviour's chief purpose, by his own action, not to *propagate* the Gospel, but to *establish* it in some centre of human agency from which it should spread through the world. Accordingly, remaining within or near the borders of His own country, He applied Himself especially to the work of educating a band of faithful men who, when He had departed from the earth, should carry abroad the knowledge and power of the truth. He was not the *Mis-*

sionary but the *Expression* of His own religion. He was Himself the great revelation. But His death was necessary in order to complete the revelation. It was necessary in order that it might be sealed as a whole, and to open the second period of the Gospel ; the era of its publication to all people. While He lived, there was something yet to be expressed, and His Apostles clung to His personal presence, as *disciples*. But, when He died, they took that " Word of Life " which they had " seen and handled," and which was now a finished Word, and carried it into every land, as its *preachers* and its *martyrs*.

Beside this, the death of Christ, involving His Resurrection, dissolves those local and material conceptions which had gathered around Him. He who no longer walked this earth in the flesh, but had ascended to the right hand of God, was now transfigured from a temporal deliverer to a universal Saviour. Gross interpretations of His office gave way to its profound significance, and a better idea of the kingdom of heaven took the place of national hope and pride.

Thus by the death of Christ the Apostles were prepared to preach the Gospel, and the world was made ready to receive it, as these could not have been had He remained in the flesh. Here then appears the applicability of the Saviour's allusion — " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." His death was as necessary to the fruition of the Gospel, as the dissolution of the seed to the abundance of the harvest. It is as though He had said—" So long

as I abide here upon the earth, you have only the revelation as an isolated germ—you have only its abstract life and power. But when I die, the world will gather the result. Then it will become a universal religion ; for all personal limitations will dissolve in my sepulchre—will drop away in my ascension to heaven.”


We see how speedily this prediction was verified. Those disciples who had so misinterpreted the sayings of Jesus, who shrunk in dismay from His cross, and wept over His burial, after His resurrection went forth to convert a world ; they demonstrated the truth of His promise that they should do greater things than Himself. On the day of Pentecost alone, more converts were gathered into the fold of Christ than all who had believed through His personal ministry. His was the primary work of preparing the seed, and until this was accomplished, neither Herod nor Caiaphas had power to shorten His time. But when the world's heart was awakened and distant nations began to murmur His name, He felt that His labors were consummated, and that the process of *development* was about to commence. Learning that certain Greeks, who had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, desired to see Him, He exclaimed—“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

In taking up the words of the text for use and application at this time, let me call your attention to the fact that the process to which Jesus refers, and which

was so strikingly illustrated in His own personal history, is a process which runs throughout the natural and moral world. I propose now to dwell upon a few specific instances.

Observe, then, in the first place, that throughout the universe there prevails this law—that decay is the condition of growth, and loss of gain, and death of life. There is a perpetual circle of beneficent change—of dissolution and of reproduction. Such is the work of the year, from summer to winter, from seed-time to harvest. Such is the revolution of ages and cycles of being. Descend into the recesses of the earth, into those immense catacombs where huge monsters lie packed away, each in its stony sarcophagus, like dead barbaric kings with the wrecks of their dynasties around them. There in a myriad fossil forms behold the seeds of human civilization, and admire the process through which these things enriched the great economy by their death more than by their life. And thus is it everywhere. Loss, defeat, sacrifice, are the terms of reward and obedience, of growth and advancement.

But, as I said in the commencement, the law of the natural is in this respect the law of the moral world. Let me, then, especially ask you to consider this process of growth and advancement as it appears in *human* affairs ; in history and in individual experience. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” See how the inmost principle of this fact appears in human *action*—in the discipline of *character*, for instance. Is it not true that increase of



good, not only for others but for ourselves, comes exactly in proportion as we extirpate *selfishness*? In this element—which, of course, I refer to in its mean and base sense—all sin has its roots; while, on the other hand, all virtue, all true religious life, springs up in the denial of it, and the victory over it. Except a man loves something, and lives for something beside himself, he does indeed “abide alone,” and his life is barren. Many of you, my hearers, may have experienced the working of this law, but I wish you all to see clearly that the law *does* work. And, I repeat, the law is this—a thoroughly selfish man abides alone. He has no wealth of blessedness in himself, and of course imparts none to others. Now it is unnecessary for me to say that, in order to be alone one need not go into a desert, or a solitary chamber. The most gloomy, impenetrable loneliness, is isolation of soul—is to live in a crowd without one reciprocal nerve, without one pulse of sympathy. To such a man, how lonely a great city must be; lonely by the very suggestion of want excited in contact with its multitudes. There is much more companionship out on the broad sea, which seems like the heaving of the Infinite bosom enfolding us and bearing us up; or in the wilderness where the birds are singing, and the flowers look up with a benediction. There is far more companionship in conditions like these than among thousands of people with whom we have no spiritual contact, and who are not linked to us by a single familiar chord. Sometimes men find themselves in such a position by no fault of their own. But often they are thus essen

tially alone, because of some inherent vice. And in this sense, I repeat, the selfish man is alone. Even in the midst of his family, see how isolated he is ; see how little access they have to the innermost wards of his heart. Everything about him is dreary and repulsive. Everything that would be genial freezes. Such forms of affection as *do* appear, are only forms. They remind us of the shapes that cluster about a fountain in winter. They *look* some like garlands, but the stems are of ice and the leaves of snow. This kind of isolation, however, is comparatively rare. Even a radically selfish man may enclose his own family within his sympathies, and in a way which indicates his selfishness all the more. But look at him in the great world of traffic, and see how solitary he is. You never can get acquainted with him. He seems, indeed, to be little more than a calculating machine put up in a human skeleton. You cannot pass into him for an exchange of sympathies, any more than if he were a cylinder of steel. He always wears the same hard look. His smile is a gasp, and his hand lies in yours like a wooden pendulum. Now does not such a man abide alone ? He may have a kind of morbid, insane ecstasy, but it is fitful, liable the next moment to be swept away. And if his nature is too hardened to feel any reproachful consciousness of neglected duties and hard extortions, is it not enough that he is shut up to his selfish idolatry and has nothing else ? His money can command a great many things, but then he must part with so much of his only comfort to obtain these. It may buy him attendance

when he is sick, and when he is no more it may bury him decently. But it cannot purchase friendship. It cannot obtain love. It cannot appease the hunger of the soul. It cannot bribe death, or throw a bridge across its lonely river. It cannot talk with him in his solitude, or lift him above his pain and sorrow. And when in his last hour he comes to part with it, how lonely he will be!


There is much of this dreadful isolation in the life of vice. It is the loneliness of a man hemmed within the cincture of his own appetites, having no relation with others but the fickle and guilty ties of passion. He has cut himself off from sympathy with the good. Every dear sanctity has been blighted by self-gratification. He alternates between a fearful torpor and a terrible consciousness. He becomes, in fact, a moral leper, tainted clear through to the heart; a living body of death, solitary and loathsome, groping in the desert which he himself has made. Oh, could you strip off a little gaiety of manner, a little finery of dress, how many, even in the crowded streets, and under the flaring lights, would really look like this!

But whatever may be the degree of selfishness, or whatever its expression, just in that proportion do we lack real profit to ourselves or to others, and we must either let it melt away in some wide circle of sympathetic effort, or in some way the everlasting law will vindicate itself.

On the other hand, as we let our narrow self-regard fall into the ground and die—as, starting from the basis of lawful self-appreciation, we go forward to

help and to bless others and become parts of the living world around us—not only does there spring up additional fruitage of good for humanity at large, but we too are made richer. Every man when he has performed an unselfish action, knows this. He feels that not only has he helped others, but that into himself there have passed a joy and a power that abide forever. In this way we gain new life. Thus, in proportion as our action is broad and human, we never die. Thus we become identified with mankind at large, and are incorporated with all past efforts of nobleness and beneficence. Thus we go forth into the boundless light and the free air of coming ages.

See how good and true men, thus stretching out from all selfish limitations, have lived in all times and in many lands. Whose names are repeated from heart to heart, from lip to lip, from continent to continent! Whose names stir the fresh blood of Liberty, and the pulses of Virtue! Men in whom the contracted kernel of self has died! Others who have won a selfish glory, and cut a sword-path to fame, may linger for a while to blaze and astonish. But these alone stand out serene and beautiful, like constellations, to attract the world's admiration and sway its best influence forever. Well has it been said by another that "No great benefit, no extensive emancipation, whether from mental slavery, from political bondage, or from social evil, . . . is ever wrought by humanity, unless the benevolent heart that undertakes the task has the strength of self-sacrifice, and is content to lay its account with long-continued endur-



ance and bitter agony. . . . It is to such that the thoughts turn. When politicians express their allegiance to the cause of freedom, they pledge the memories of those who died in the field or on the scaffold. When the energies of nations awake, their minds first turn not to those who have conquered, but to those who have fallen. The lingering friends of liberty in Rome looked to the name of Cato, and the victorious cause that pleased the gods was held by them to be inferior to the vanquished cause for which Cato sacrificed his life."

But the more closely the cause is connected with the spiritual which is the permanent welfare of men, the more noble is the sacrifice made in its behalf. And so, over the worthiest achievements—over paths strewn with heroic ashes and martyr-blood—we pass to the sacrifice of Him whose death is the world's life, and who, under the shadow of His own Cross said—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."


But I proceed to observe that this law of growth and advancement which is thus illustrated in human *action*, is also illustrated in human *suffering* and *endurance*. It is a law which appears in the perils of life. For instance, who can rightly estimate the ministry of *disappointment*? Who can tell the rich attainment that has been wrought through its agency? How often does failure in the pursuit of some cherished object make known something more desirable, and turn a man's feet in a happier direction. So long as

that was, of all others, his cherished object, it hid the nobler interest from his sight. But his hope, which if attained would perhaps have yielded him lean satisfaction, perishes, and its perishing is far better for him.

Suppose that object to be the attainment of a fortune. For that end a man toils year after year ; but all his projects come to nothing. Finally, this reiterated disappointment induces him to abandon his ambitious aim, to modify his desires, and to rest contented with some less dazzling achievement. But, I repeat, in being led to that conclusion he may find the most important result of all that effort ; he may find indeed the Providential purpose of that effort. Not only has this rough experience taught him the mutability of all earthly objects, but thus he may be impelled to lay up treasures above all canker and deceit. Nay, even in these worldly conditions, he may become eventually a richer and a happier man. He finds a magic power in contentment—an unfailing spring of comfort in moderation ; and the chief advantages of wealth are simply in the right use of life—in the mood that discerns the blessedness of any lot. Just observe the peculiarity of this case. I repeat, this experience did not come to him in the legitimate succession of things, but in the failure of his most cherished plans. Out of their decay that rich harvest sprung up in his soul. While he was absorbed in that intense pursuit he had no enjoyment of the passing hour. His were no expanding sympathies,—blessing and being blest. He had no self-knowledge, no inward resources—

nothing but that dry and solitary purpose. But that having failed, this more durable good has sprung up in its place. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Sometimes this process is very manifest in occasions of deep affliction. When the first agony of bereavement has subsided so as to allow the succession of calmer thought, memory often becomes to us a tender and solemn pleasure. Sometimes people may fall into the error of supposing that there has been no deep affection, and but little real grief, because, the violence of sorrow passing away, it is followed by a calm cheerfulness. But that state of mind may more truly honor the memory of the departed than floods of tears. For then, perhaps, we just begin to understand them, and truly to live with them. Recollected in the tender light of affection, all its features gathered up in sympathy, every foible softened away, and only the good made prominent, the image thus rising before us sheds upon our hearts a stronger and better influence than when it was embodied amidst the evil of the world, and beheld only in fragmentary revelations. The worst of us may leave behind some gentle memory that, to fond hearts, will almost cancel the evil we have done. The most degraded may be remembered by some good trait, awakening here and there a sympathy which will drop in kindly dew upon his grave. Death makes a beautiful appeal to charity. When we look upon the dead form so composed and still, the kindness and the love that are in us all come forth,



despite the wreck and the wickedness, the enmity and the shame, to detect some trace of better humanity. That life must have been bad indeed, from which we cannot gather one little flower of memory that we are glad to cherish, and that always sheds a fragrance around the departed name. And if even the worst may thus create some good influence by dropping from our sight, how much more the noble and the good! As to the worthies of our race, it is only after they are gone that they are truly appreciated. Only when they have receded from earthly contact, and become orbs in the firmament of history, do we see their full proportions and receive their concentrated light. And concerning the more obscure but not less loved, has not many a home and many a heart some record of its own which becomes a developing revelation of their virtues and their influence as time rolls on? How little we knew them, and how slightly their real excellence touched us, when they sat by our hearth-fires, and toiled by our side, and ministered to our wants, and bore with uncomplaining meekness our irritability and our mistakes. How well we understand them now, as they commune with us in a light from heaven, and with the enduring faithfulness we did not recognize until nothing of them was left but what they did for us. Yes, often is it so, that forms of affection and sacred duty must fall into the ground and die ere we gather their blessed fruit.

And thus we may come to regard the gloomiest fact of all as a wise and beautiful process. We see that in the *natural* world death is only the agent of higher


life. The earth on which we stand is the contribution of perished existences. Their dust is the material of generations. Ages to come will blossom out of their decay. And is it not in the ranks of humanity as in fields of corn or wheat? Is not death everywhere the instrument of some rarer good that can spring up *only* when the germinal body falls into the ground?

It is a broad and serene faith that rightly apprehends this process of growth and advancement in all the trials of life; which sees the descending orbs of this earth travelling far upward as morning stars in the immortal sphere. Setting is preliminary to brighter rising, decay is a process of advancement, death is the condition of higher and more fruitful life—this appears to be the doctrine of the text. It is a principle applicable both in the *action* of human life and in its *endurance*, in trial and in duty. Such is the testimony of personal experience; but now let me ask you to consider the operation of this principle in the general course of things.

I think we shall find the testimony of history running to this effect: that no great principle of truth and righteousness has a direct and uninterrupted development. It has its periods of original utterance and partial success, of failure and renewal. In short, such a principle will have a succession of seed-times and harvests before it reaches its consummation. But it is important for us to notice that these very intervals of apparent barrenness and burial, are essential to that consummation. God does not work by perpetual miracle. That would be a contradiction in terms. He


does not vouchsafe the incessant guidance of revelation. Therefore, before truth in the abstract can become truth in the concrete, it must sink into the soil of human experience, and grow in harmony with the laws of human progress. It must be precipitated into the mould of different ages. It must slowly filtrate through existing institutions. Thus it gradually elevates mankind to better conceptions, and prepares them for a better realization of itself. That which inspired lips have taught, which high-lifted sages have seen, and which martyrs have sealed with their blood, is not instantly recognized by the mass of men. Ages may glide away, ages of emotion and of stagnation, of hope and of dismay, of decline and of advancement, before the abstract truth becomes a ripe and admitted fact. Nevertheless, being truth, it is a germ of imperishable vitality in the world. And, believing this, in dark and desolate seasons we shall detect the divine method, we shall hear that truth simmering in the laboratory of events, and know that by and by it will break out upon their face, complete and triumphant as the morning. The very periods in which a great principle seems dead and buried, may be counted as periods of its unresting development.

Now there is great consolation in this, as there is in everything which we ascertain to be a providential law. And we can find no more striking illustration of it than that to which we are led by the words of Jesus in the text. I mean the illustration which appears in the career of Christianity in the world. We have seen that, in the first place, its growth depended



upon the death of its Divine Founder, and how it sprung forth from His sepulchre with fresh vigor and glory. But in another sense, in that early age, the seed of the Gospel may be said to have fallen into the ground and died. It was not apprehended in its pure spirituality by the immediate hearers of Christ. Even as it came from His lips it fell into the ground of Jewish conceptions and literal limitations. The day of Pentecost, and the mission of Paul, were occasions of its renewal and second birth, so to speak. Again, as a spiritual principle it fell into the ground of pagan interpretation and formalism. But through these forms and interpretations, it was conveyed to individuals and to communities, who otherwise would not have received it. It was all the while growing and advancing, and apparent interruptions to its progress were efficient instruments of that progress.

And in more modern times it will be found that the same law has attended the development of pure Christian truth. Scepticism and sectarianism may have seemed to hinder and almost bury it. The bald materialism of the last century, when the soul was reduced to organic tissue, and the Bible was tossed aside as a compilation of fables—what was its up-shot? Why, that these grand and ancient truths only asserted themselves more vigorously. Whatever else remains as the result of free and scientific thinking, that materialistic scheme does not remain; while the judicial intellect gives its witness to the essential authenticity of the Evangelist's narrative, and the deep heart of humanity responds to the Psalmist's utterance. More



recently we have witnessed a philosophical reaction to the other extreme from materialism—a philosophy of intuition and general inspiration, aided by the apparatus of a most acute and comprehensive criticism. But still, what has been the result? Some human accretions may have been removed, accretions of false interpretation and conceit; but in clearer prominence than ever, come out the divine reality of Jesus, and the truth of the wonderful narrative in which He stands enshrined. And such, too, is the result after all the discoveries in the world of nature. The closer observation of God's works only renders more necessary the complementary revelation of the divine word. No truth stands compromised on either hand. The facts of matter and the facts of spirit, moving upon different planes, do not come into collision, but mutually illustrate one divine plan. The scientific result stands approved by sense and reason, but cannot cancel the deep experience of a Christian soul. Ethnology may break the concrete surface of humanity into the mosaic of a thousand races,—it cannot turn into diverse channels that common under-current, that deep gulf-stream, which heaves with the impulses and the yearnings of one nature and one blood. Geology may throw open its rocky catacombs stamped with the hieroglyphics of incalculable time. It cannot divorce the conscious soul from that eternal love which is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Astronomy may appal our fleshly eyesight with its sweep of boundless space. But only more impressive, more needed, more real, seems that Bible truth uttered long ago—"Thou



hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." As we see what the natural world is, we only feel more vividly what the spiritual truth of Jesus means, and the clouds of sense that to some may have seemed for the time to eclipse it, part open before the divine lustre that streams from the love of the cross.

Or has the vital truth of Christianity seemed to perish in the furrows of sectarian zeal? A moment's consideration enables us to correct this view. Controversy within the church, often so deplorable in its *spirit*, has in its *ends* been fruitful with the richest results. The necessary separating of the chaff from the wheat; the necessary pushing forward from different angles of vision of the converging lines of that comprehensive truth which, as a whole, no single man, or age, or party sees. It may be the case, that in the early efforts of any sect, the one dominant truth overlaps other truths, and represses for the time the elements of devotional power. But in due season this smothered vitality begins to ripen, and the significance of the intellectual protest appears in some fresh phase of Christian life. If only those who serve the sect would cherish the consciousness that it is merely a *sect*—that there is a more comprehensive, a common Body of Christ to which it belongs, and in which in time it may even lose its distinctive name and its vitality be absorbed—if only men would not identify perpetual controversy with eternal doctrine; if only they would look around with charity, and look forward with hope, to that more glorious, more comprehensive church, and feel what little insect-builders we all are in the devel-

opment of that majestic fabric—then, indeed, we should detect no fatal evil in sectarianism, and perceive how in these war-worn furrows the seeds of vital Christianity have not perished, but have brought forth much fruit.

And so we follow out the law proclaimed in the text, into those practical forms with which Christianity reveals its working in the bosom of society—the forms of justice, of truth, of love. It is only to our limited and faithless eyesight that any righteous cause, falling into the ground, seems to perish. Scaffolds, despotisms, ruinous battle-fields,—these are all conditions of the harvest. Truth, or justice, or liberty, swathe it in parchment cerements; dig its grave with bayonets; press it down with thrones, bastiles, slave-blocks; sprinkle it all over with the venerable dust of despotism, and in that dust trace the lines of its epitaph. It may be buried, but has it really perished? Can you bury the spirit of Christ? The earth rolls, the sun shines on, the spring winds blow, God's truth flows into the soul of man, and not a kernel of the righteous seed will fail to ripen at the last.

“God is patient, for He is Eternal.” But let us not be dismayed, in any private, in any public trial of this life, because our short reeds of measurement cannot mark out His great plan.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” What a sublime law and process does this proclaim! What vast consolation does it unfold! How pregnant with

the inspiration of hope for ourselves and for the world !
How calmly may we take up this truth and cling to it !
Take it up and cling to it—in our trial for trust ; in
our action for effort ; and in our survey of the general
movement of things, for the vindication of our faith in
a just, and advancing, and beneficent scheme of Provi-
dence.

VII.

The Two Mites.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

MARK XII. 43, 44.

OUR Saviour's approval of this poor widow illustrates the *Spiritual Test* which He applied to actions and to men. Just before this we read His rebuke of the Scribes. Before His estimate the long robes shrunk away, and the sonorous prayers fell dead to the earth. But the coin that dropped from that humble hand He valued more than all that had been cast into the treasury; for under those faded weeds He saw the riches of *Faith* and *Sacrifice*.

It is hardly necessary to dwell upon this special point. I would simply call your attention here to the fact that this estimate is applied to us all, and is the ultimate standard by which we are tried. In the midst of our occupations, an eye like the eye of Him who sat over against the Temple-treasury scans every one of


us, and to *that* judgment our conditions and our professions are like the Scribe's clothing, or the widow's weeds.

In fact, the entire experience of life is the practical operation of this divine test. Life is a crucible. We are thrown into it and tried. The actual weight and value of a man are expressed in the *spiritual substance* of the man. All else is dross. And surely it is a strange compound that is thus mixed in this vessel of human life. Tatters and splendor, pompous respectabilities and leprous crimes, recoiling one from the other, endeavoring to find an element of separation in some specialty of rank or possession, of bulk or color, nevertheless, whirling side by side in the steam and bubble of being, tried by the heats of passion and the intensities of experience, and at last passing under the same relentless test. But stranger still must it be when each of these comes out through the cold valves of death, with nothing but his condensed and naked spirituality. All the rest over which he lamented or exulted, his rank or his implements, his rags or his money, left behind as the mere dross of his existence. But it is more strange than all that men should compute life by the dross, and rate the substance by the shell. Surely, this was what those Scribes of old did, whose sanctity was all in their garments, and whose prayers, while they "devoured widows' houses," were but the grace before meat. And this is what every man does who regards position more than principle—the garment more than the heart.

And the eyes of Jesus, sitting over against the Tem

ple-treasury, or wherever He went, saw then just what comes out finally from this great crucible of life. He saw the spiritual substance of men under all its envelopments. He saw the depth of motive and the wealth of heart. And, perceiving that the widow's two mites were charged with the sanctities of her soul, He weighed and valued them accordingly. That which positively enriches the universe is spiritual life. One manifestation of this is worth more than splendid gifts—more than all the material wealth of the world.

Had we a vision sufficiently clear and penetrating, doubtless we should behold many strange transmutations as the external conditions of men give place to the inward features of character. It has been well suggested that thousands of "ghosts" walk by our side in the great city every day—ghosts wrapped in a frail frame-work of flesh—stalking in a little silk and broadcloth. And if we should see some of these "ghosts" as they really are, if we could see the habitual expression of their spiritual features, it would probably startle us more than the conventional ghost of the haunted house, or the nursery tale. Such small, shrivelled germs of soul as we might sometimes see! The ghosts of men staring out with all their fearful passions; glaring in the fixed purpose of avarice, or of sensual desire; contorted with hate, attenuated with envy, dark with revenge; mere puffs of vapor now blown out in assumptive pride; shades of an inverted selfishness that now walks in robes of piety; and wisps of ostentatious pretension which, in this worldly masquerade, play high parts and make a great noise,



but which, "laid in the balance, are altogether lighter than vanity."

And there may be a great many who suppose if human nature were stripped to its spiritual substance and brought out in its intrinsic character, this is all that it would reveal. Men of the world, shrines, philosophers, think they have closely reached truth of things, when they regard their fellows as mere compounds of selfishness and vanity. They believe not only that everybody wears a mask, but that it is *all* mask; and they sum up their conclusions in a stinging formula that—"Every man has his price."

But these men are as much mistaken in their estimates as those who calculate only from external appearances. They look only from one point of view—from their own limited experience; or it may be from their own corrupted hearts. They have been deluded by some, and henceforth they denounce all. They have awakened in themselves, or they have called out in others, only those selfish elements which *do* exist in all, and they think that humanity is nothing but selfishness. They study society with an opera-glass, and fancy they are studying it very thoroughly. No: their lens is too shallow in its penetration, too narrow in its scope. It wants not merely microscopic but telescopic power, to know humanity in its essence; a power to discern its grandeur as well as its littleness, the infinity of its relations as well as the meanness of its pursuits. The human soul is a great deep. We must take into view the nebulous possibilities that are brooding and waiting there, and notice the buds and films

of light that reveal themselves even in the darkest spaces.

I call your attention, then, especially to the fact that, although the vision of Jesus was turned full upon the innermost substance of humanity, He did not find it all mean and dark. The most searching gaze that was ever bent upon man from eyes of flesh did not confirm the conclusion of the cynic, that the more we know of our race the worse we shall find them. He, looking wider, looking deeper than any, found some good ; found it not all base and frivolous.

He had just been exposing the pretensions of the Scribes, but how readily did He detect the ray of goodness which streamed out from the humble deed of the poor widow ! What a beautiful phase of humanity did His prompt sympathy and approval reveal ! How different is this, I repeat, from that misanthropic perception which sees nothing but guilt and gloom—from that satirical spirit which delights in hitting the fool, or tearing the robes from the hypocrite, and which conveys the impression that society is made up of fools and hypocrites. We may call this wholesome truth, we may call it needed severity. But it is not the whole truth, nor is it the best way of setting forth the truth. The world is not all fools and hypocrites ; nay, it is difficult to believe even that any one man is all fool or hypocrite. He who seeks for instances of human weakness as the material for cynical conclusions, will undoubtedly find plenty of them. But of all the traits which he thus collects in his cabinet of the grotesque and the vile, I question whether he has one

complete specimen of any man. Depend upon it—though sometimes facts seem to forbid our belief—there *is* some spring of good feeling in the worst heart ; or, at least, some dim ideal of better things by which its tides, however feebly, are moved and drawn. In the most shallow nature there clings some shred of dignity which redeems it from utter contempt. And it is a mean performance, or else it is purblind sight, that selects the odious features and parades them as the sum-total of human nature. If this really were so, what a world this would be ! Faith of home and friendship ! pulses of human confidence, that run along the street and circulate around the globe ! what would be left if thus your sanctities should be denied and cast away ? Let us feel sure of this—that a man whose vision is positively clear and spiritual, while he cannot help detecting the evil, and must denounce it, also recognizes the good and rejoices to point it out. The highest genius never flowers in satire, but culminates in sympathy with that which is best in human nature, and appeals to it. The satirist may amuse us for a time with his keenness and vigor, but he soon ceases to delight, and he never inspires us. He has linear skill. He cuts striking profiles. But we feel that he does not present us with the broadest expression of human nature, nor even with a complete type of any class of men. But another, who touches the lights and shades of humanity with a genial spirit, who draws out the worth that is hidden in coarseness and obscurity, and contrives to reveal “the soul of goodness in things evil,” even though chargeable with exaggeration, meets an instinctive

response from the common heart. And this success in intellectual performance indicates the facts in human life and character. There is good as well as evil in the heart of man. There are long-robed Scribes. There are hypocritical Pharisees. But there are poor widows also ; and the comprehensive vision recognizes the one as well as the other. And the true man, while he is forced to acknowledge colossal wickedness and paramount deceit, delights to honor the least gleam of excellence shining out in lowly and neglected places. Moreover, it is his privilege to *discover* this excellence—to see, after all, how rich life is with virtue, and how beautiful with love. It is given to him to see what grandeur often consorts with weakness, what heroism with life-long pain, what divine familiarity flows down into the humble spirit, and what stars of promise stand over the tabernacles of the poor. Oh ! all around us there are transactions akin to that in the treasury of the temple. This hour, there are poor women whose sacrifice of faith and duty is as rich in God's eyes as the widow's two mites. Hidden among these thick dwellings there are deeds of self-denying affection that, in the eternal scales, weigh down coins and ingots. Come before us in this Sabbath hour, images of noble performance and faithful endurance ! Stand up in the midst of your desolate home, O patient wife, whose love and prayers still cling around your drunken husband ! and let your silent tears drop into life's great treasury. Come, Christian Trust ! and let us see how rich that faith has made your need and limitation, expanding those narrow walls into the palace of infinity,

and hanging scriptural texts like constellations along your way. Come, humble Charity, forgetting your own wants in ministering to the woes of others, that we may discover how your spirit transfigures the dark nook and lonely lane into a celestial road, and underneath those faded garments shows us angels' feet!

It is indeed a rare privilege to possess a vision which sees through the forms of things to their substance, and knows all that is false and hollow; but it is much more blessed to possess this vision in its comprehensiveness, that we may recognize the good there is in human life as well as the evil; that we may see what dignity there is in humility, what greatness in obscurity, and how much value even in two mites.


But the incident connected with the text not only teaches us to make right estimates of others. It furnishes practical suggestions for ourselves. In the first place, we learn from it that the test of principle is in *effort* and in *cost*. My brethren, there is a great deal of diffused and unapplied principle in the world. Almost everybody has some of it in the ore, but there are many who have never brought it into a circulating condition; no, hardly to the amount of two mites. For instance, how much *reverence* there is in the abstract! The most profane wretch in the streets would, very likely, be affronted by the man who should deny the existence of God, or speak lightly of the Redeemer, while the next moment he will desecrate both with his oaths and his conduct. Where can you find a man who does not praise honesty and brotherly love? You will hear any amount of this commenda-

tion in places where, before to-morrow morning, there will be a dozen thefts and twenty quarrels. Consider how much the moral principle of the community—I mean the moral principle that is publicly professed and talked about—is in advance of the actual principle of individuals. In the former instance, principle is honored merely in decorous expressions; in the latter it requires personal effort. Men magisterially severe against unpopular vices, practice them in private. The majestic symbol that stands aloft on capitol and courthouse, expresses the public ideal of justice; but the justice that is summoned into many an ordinary transaction wears a slovenly bandage, and has falsified its scales. I repeat, then, there is a great deal of unapplied principle, just as there is a great deal of unapplied air and water flowing abroad in general currents. In order that it may have a *personal* value, we must bring it to bear upon the machinery of the heart and the will. It must be *our own* principle, nourished and put forth with effort and with cost. No man knows the genuineness of his convictions until he has sacrificed something for them. Therefore, it is a close question to ask—How much have your principles cost you? Have they ever repressed a single indulgence? have they ever lopped off a bad habit? have they ever over-balanced dollars and cents? These general streams of moral sentiment may make the abstract landscape of society look very picturesque, but have you ever turned them in among the wheels and pullies of your own personality, so that out of your individual life fresh contributions of spiritual force go abroad

in the world ? By your appearance here in the church, among the ordinances of the Sabbath, many of you express a general faith in the fundamental verities of religion. But permit me to ask—how much have you ever done in the *spirit* of religion ? In the light of its great conceptions, how much effort, how much sacrifice, have you ever made ? There is a far wider *profession* of faith in christianity now than in the age of the primitive church. But how much more christianity exists now ? There are good men and wise men who, aware that the vitality of the Gospel is not in outward attainments but in consecration of soul, are perplexed in deciding whether in this nineteenth century, notwithstanding its magnificent vehicles of civilization, there are any evidences of genuine progress. Surely, if any such progress *is* apparent, it is not where the mere utensils of that progress become the idols of our trust, and the tents that are pitched for a day swell into decorated chambers of luxury and pride. It is not where the grander interests of life are swamped by material splendor ; but it *is* where human hearts are consecrated by christian love and holiness, and at all costs devote themselves to their work. Whether it lifts up its voice like a trumpet against oppression, or labors among the degraded and the poor ; whether it walks the ghastly hospital, or toils beneath oriental palms ; wherever principle is maintained with cost, and men are conscious of doing something or denying something for the sake of principle, there are spiritual value and genuine growth. The poor widow's act represents the grandest result that goes through the

ages. Out of all this glare and clamor, in the thunder of obedient forces and the rush of dizzy wheels, these are the products we honor, and point to as proofs of real life and advancement in our time :—there, where the form of womanly charity bends in the wards of Scutari ; or where the legend of heroic faith and philanthropy, recorded on those icy walls, is burnished by the sun of Polar summers, and gleams through all those dreary aisles on which the cold stars shine. And not alone in vast achievements appears this consecrating vitality of cost and sacrifice. No : here comes out the beauty of the Scriptural lesson. Small means, humble efforts, are exalted by the motive. Such deeds, wrought by faithful men and women in the spirit of duty, are their two mites, all they have, even all their living—and are counted in the treasury of imperishable good.

Yes, it was *this* that made the poor widow's gift so precious. Had the "many who were rich" brought their entire possessions and poured them out there, in this estimate it would all have amounted to no more than her act. "For," says the Saviour, "all they did cast in of their abundance ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." Those two mites ! They were heavy with her labor and her prayers and her self-denial, and so, as they fell into the treasury, they rung in the ear of heaven, and Jesus valued them. Had they remained in other hands they would have been but two mites still. Therefore, these principles of righteousness that are commended from lip to lip, are for us worth nothing until they



are coined in our own hearts, stamped with the image and superscription of our own personality, and poured into the world by our own positive endeavor.

I will urge another lesson that may be drawn from the incident before us. It is involved with the idea of *contribution*. In the first place, there is the very palpable lesson, that we all may do some good in the world. The humblest cannot plead inefficiency, since the poor widow has been thus honored in her gift. A very palpable lesson which it behooves every one of us to heed!

But *this* fact also comes up here—the fact that each of us actually *is* contributing something to the general sum of human influence. Each of our lives is itself a contribution of good or evil for the world. Every day men are casting into the treasury; casting their wisdom, their love, or their folly; casting their effort and their example. Sometimes, alas! their folly weighs down their gold, and their wisdom is not worth two mites. And sometimes it is only a refreshing word, or a kind deed, and yet it outvalues the contributions of many who are rich. Sometimes men contribute *themselves*. In fact, there are two kinds of self-devotion. Here is one who has devoted himself to the ideal of duty. Filial affections, social obligations, religious convictions, move him to cancel his own selfish desires; to curb his appetites, his ambition, and his pride, and to make sacrifice for others. In the labor of supporting helpless parents he renounces the brilliant prospects of his youth, and settles down in uncomplaining drudgery. Or, in order to carry forward some truth,

he leaves father and mother, and houses and lands. In order that he may serve the cause of God he takes his life in his hands across great oceans and lonely deserts. To the stock and treasury of the divine glory and of human welfare, he contributes *himself*. Oh, how such men, whether in public life or in private, are to be valued! Men who, in the spirit with which the widow gave up her two mites, have given up themselves. How their names sparkle! How rich their very ashes are! How they will count up in heaven!

On the other hand, here is one who instead of contributing to the value of life adds to its *waste*. He too gives up himself. He gives up the fine gold of his humanity to corruption—to lust and impulse, to polluting sensuality and consuming desire. That is the word—Waste! The dreadful waste of bloom and hope, of reputation and integrity, of body and soul, in that great treasury of vice, whose bankers are sin and death! If in this reckless casting away of himself, he could only see the pity in that searching eye which is looking upon him even now!

But of this one thing be sure—of our words, our deeds, our entire life, we *are* contributing something to the sum of moral being. What is that contribution, my hearers? Do we live so as to make our two mites of power and influence richer than mere earthly advantages? or, so that our earthly advantages are not worth two mites?

I observe, finally, that the transaction before us illustrates the dignity that religious faith imparts to all with which it is allied. That poor widow, shrink-

ing in the crowd of the ostentatious and the rich, and dropping the two mites from her trembling hand—how she stands out now before all ages! How grand those faded garments look! Christ has honored her, and a halo of brightness is around her forevermore: and her faith has become her reward. It is hardly a fanciful light by which we trace out the history of her trials ending in this triumph. We imagine how she bore the desolation of her sorrow. It was as hard for her then as it is for any of us now to feel the anguish of that last mortal look. It was as hard to bear that awful sense of bereavement and solitude, that comes when the grave's door is shut, and says to us more impressively than words—"Alone! alone!" It was as hard to face the necessities of life, and make the effort to ward off destitution. Yes, she is linked to you, poor ones, bereaved ones, by experiences that run through every age and all round the world. But, it may be, almost as hard as all the rest, was that resolution to take the two mites and carry them to the treasury. Not that her *want* pleaded, but, perhaps, her pride, which even poverty and affliction cannot utterly quench. She must stand side by side with the great and the sumptuous, and how would her two mites look when cast in among their gold and silver! But then came the encouragement of faith; then streamed in the sublime conviction of duty; and she did that which lends interest to all her history.

And it is this that lends interest to the obscurest of us all. Our lives and our deeds grow momentarily significant in the light of religious realities. The great

fact to be considered is not our lot in life, but *we* who are in that lot, and what we make out of it. The important point is, how we meet life's issues, and the use to which we put them, and the amount of wealth we bring to the treasury at last. And, I repeat, religious faith dignifies the least act performed in its spirit. In summing up the real value of human things, those men and women appear the greatest who, whatever their means or station, have wrought in the conviction of duty.

Let us, then, each accept the lot assigned us, simply to do the best we can in it and with it. Religious faith levels all earthly inequalities and removes all disguises. In its clear light how the *real* breaks through the *apparent*, and all outward symbols give way before the spirit and the life. Nay, in the quick apprehension of that faith, the future is made present, and the unseen becomes visible, and the multitudes of men, and the diversities of our mortal life, are transformed into the congregation of immortal souls. And among those whose crowns are brightest there, and who walk with serenest look, are those who by their spirit enriched their means, and who, though able to give but little, cast in all that they had.

VIII.

Home.

God setteth the solitary in families.—PSALM LXVIII. 6.

THESE few words suggest the subject to which I invite your attention in this discourse. They indicate a Divine purpose in placing the individual man in domestic relations. They lead us also to consider the significance and importance of the *Family*. Moreover, they call our attention to the *results* flowing from this institution. I propose, therefore, to speak,—

- I. Of the relations of the Individual to the Family.
- II. Of the Family in itself.
- III. Of the Family in its connection with Society.

I. Observe the relations of the individual to the family. And I affirm, in the outset, that these relations indicate a Divine purpose.

The organs and functions of the human body are often selected as proofs of Divine design. And de-

spite all metaphysical subtleties this argument cannot be refuted, for it indicates not only fitness in the end but *thought* in the means. It rests upon the *relation* of one thing to another—upon adaptation and reciprocity. Even in instances where the corresponding fact does not appear, we infer what *must* be from what *is*. The physiologist will delineate the structure of, a man, or an animal, by inductions from a single tooth or a bit of bone; or he will argue the existence of light from the character of the eye. So does the individual man appear as only a part of a larger organism, and from his very nature we might infer the existence of the family as a corresponding fact. It is not an invention of man, but an institution of God, and therefore whatever may be said of larger communities, in the family we have a Divine form of society. All other associations might dissolve, and yet in this human life and welfare would be secured. But this could not be the case, if the family should dissolve. It is an institution which can be conceived as existing independent of tribes, independent of States,—in fact, as containing in itself all the functions of a complete society. On the other hand, although speculatively we may obstruct the individual from the family, we cannot conceive of him as truly and completely living, apart from this relation. We may separate a single leaf from a tree, or a fibre from a clump of moss, but this is not the way in which vegetable life actually flourishes; it is always in groups and masses. So among men. The family appears as a primary form upon the earth, an original and complete organism,

from which the individual can no more fitly be separated than the hand from the body. And the individual organism prefigures the organism of the family as truly as the tooth, or the joint, prefigures the organism of the human frame. I repeat, then, whatever we may say of other forms of society, here is a primary fact; a fact of Divine establishment. It is God who has endowed the individual man with this social need and ministration. It is God who has set "the solitary in families."

And now I ask you to consider, for a moment, the *beneficence* of this relation so far as the individual is concerned; beneficence just as evident as that which appears in the mutual relations of the members of the human body. In examining the eye, or the hand, we do not dwell alone upon the proofs of creative power and skill, but we speak of creative *goodness*. Not only do we say—"How admirably *made* is this organ of sight!" "How exquisitely endowed is this organ of touch!" but "How much delight and blessedness in the action of these!" We may sever the right hand from the wrist; we may pluck the eye from its socket: still there would be the wonderful structure, the delicate tissues and exquisite draperies of creative skill. But gone is all the *delight* from those dead fibres and shrivelled nerves. This ensued only as they served and were served, being parts of a reciprocal organism; the eye seeing, and the hand feeling, each for all and all for each. And in this entire organism what joy, what glory, what fulness of benevolence, as well as constructive wisdom!

So, what beneficence, what blessedness, in the relations of the family! How intensely solitary,—or, as the word in the text might be translated, “forsaken,”—would man be, apart from these relations. Consider how it would fare with him were all those powers and dispositions that are exercised at home repressed, or unemployed. He would indeed be but a “creature” rather than a man. Solitary? The most lonely of beings is a man cut off from all social relations and domestic ties. The rock that stands out in the ocean alone with the sky and the surf, is only an *image* of human desolation. In its position there is nothing incongruous with its intrinsic nature. And it is *not* really solitary. It is at one with the elements around it, lending and receiving beauty, grandeur, and unconscious delight. It stands out there among the wild waves that twine it with sea-weed, and scatter triumphal diamonds on its head. The clouds take it up into their awfulness and mystery, and all the lights and shades of heaven shift and mingle upon it as they come and go. So, too, the wild bird that flies so lone and far, has somewhere its nest and brood. A little fluttering heart of love impels its wings and points its course. There is nothing so solitary as a solitary man. In no being are there such faculties depending upon the institution of the family for their unfolding and their nourishment. I say—depending upon the institution of the *family*; not upon society, but upon something more radical and sacred than society. There are qualities in man’s nature which could not exist were we to abrogate the sanctity of the home.

And here is an answer to all theorists who seek to dissolve that peculiar sanctity in more general relations of humanity. There are men who for the bonds of marriage would substitute the freedom of affinities, and break the wedding ring as a superstitious symbol. There should be no domestic partitions, no appropriated hearth-stone, no hallowed nook of family life—only one great court-yard of social relations, turning all the house into a doorway! But humanity has no rights that would cancel that bond of domestic peculiarity out of which alone a genuine humanity can grow. Break up the institution of the family, deny the inviolability of its relations, and in a little while there would not be any humanity. I know what evils are involved in existing conditions. I know what brutalities take shelter under the domestic relations and insult, and bruise, and kill, in the very name of the law. But everything has its shadow. Evil mingles with all human agency. And, because these evils *do* exist, to break the strong bands of the marriage relation and set the family group adrift in some vague conceit of social freedom, or some nonsense of “spiritual affinities,” would be like knocking a ship in pieces because some of the passengers are sea-sick. This organism of the family is a ship that has carried human civilization over the waves of ages—an ark that has preserved the germs of the social state in many a deluge. Sunder the ties that hold it together, and who can estimate the ruin, or from the shattered fragments reconstruct society? “God setteth the solitary in families;” and, I repeat, in this peculiar

relation and not merely in society at large, qualities are developed that otherwise would remain dormant, or assume a stunted and uncertain growth. Man in selfish solitude is like a telescope closed up. The qualities of his humanity may exist, but they are unknown. But now consider what powers and affections are drawn out in the family.

Without attempting to enumerate all these qualities, I ask you, for instance, to consider the *parental* sentiment. Have you ever really estimated the strength and beauty of this, and thought how much it contributes to the mere individuality of man or woman? By himself, a man may be a scholar, a thinker, a worker, and so fill a wide orbit of usefulness and enjoyment. But need I say how all his powers acquire strength, how all his sympathies become intensified, when these are impelled by a father's affection, and involved with the solitudes of a father's care? Need I say what new life is imparted to him in the lives of his children; nay, what depths are opened, what chords are touched, what enlarged vision is given, even by their death? Shall I attempt to describe what no language can express,—the power, and beauty, and heroism, and majesty, of a mother's love? Is not that a marvellous change which transforms the thoughtless girl into the brave and patient minister of God's greatest gifts to man—the saving nurture, the early care, the vigilance and teaching, the love that is fathomless, which years and sin and shame cannot balk, which from its exhaustless wells flows out for the lost and wayward child; that shrinks not where

man cowers, and grows stronger where man faints,—and over the wastes of worldly fortune sends the radiance of its quenchless fidelity like a star in heaven? Memories of mothers dead and living, never to be stricken from the soul; forms of mothers grey and bent with years, or slumbering in quiet churchyards; faces of mothers on earth and in heaven, lighted with all the associations that cluster around that name; move our hearts to think and feel what powers, what blessings, God calls into being when He “setteth the solitary in families.”

In the soil of home, too, grow filial love, fraternal affection, the sentiments of mutual dependence and mutual trust; yes, even that religious reverence which man carries into the highest postures of the soul, and by which he is taught to conceive of the Heavenly Father.

Consider, then, what is superadded to individual life by the family relation, and acknowledge the wisdom and beneficence of God in this primeval organism! Home, wherever found; the cheerful house, the rude wigwam, the cavern, the tent, the stately palace, the burrow in the ground, is in its elements ordained by Him who makes no thing in all His universe to be alone; who links fibre to fibre, limb to limb, eye to hand; and who only in social spheres gives room for the noblest individual powers.

II. Let us, in the next place, direct our attention to home as an institution in itself. In reply to the notions of certain theorists, I have just urged the



sacredness of the family relation. I have spoken of the family as a Divine institution. But this should not be a mere abstraction with us. It should be realized and felt. And the way in which home is practically regarded by any of us, will prove how much we realize and feel these claims. Let the father, the mother, the child, ask—"What is home to me?"—and the answer will be the standard by which we may know how far, in our relations to it, the Divine purpose of the family is fulfilled. If we make home only a place to eat and sleep in, a hotel or caravansera; if we are employed merely in making provision for it, and securing temporal good; then that Divine purpose is *not* fulfilled.

Now it is not necessary for me to speak of gross violations of the duties of Home, which all would be prompt to condemn. But I *will* speak here of one such gross violation, more gross in the very fact that it is silent and perhaps unseen. I do not allude to acts of physical violence. I speak of blows that fall on naked hearts, of violence done to the deepest sanctities of life. I speak of affections withering from neglect—of confidence basely abused. I speak of vows that God has sealed, broken and trampled under foot. I speak of the shameful profligacy of husbands and fathers, belonging to hundreds of homes in this very city. I speak of men with wives and daughters, who make light of the sanctities of that womanhood in which those wives and daughters are glorified. Men breathing a moral atmosphere, one breath of which by wife or daughter would blast her with en-

during shame. Men hiding their sneaking abomination with social decencies, and living as if they were masked from God. Men who, if they really felt their own meanness, would skulk from the face of virtue, and wilt in the light of innocence. Lepers of domestic infidelity. Animate plague spots in broadcloth and fine linen. Heads of families, over each of whose door-posts should be written the proclamation of "a desecrated home," and whose foreheads should be stamped with "the mark of the Beast."

Not lingering upon this, however, let me pass on to protest against all styles of living that often lead to this, or which in any other way tend to the depreciation of home. It is lamentable that so many virtually live without a home. Of course, I do not mean those who are forced to this as a dreadful necessity. But I allude to those who from mere love of luxury, or the desire for ease and convenience, forego the establishment of a home. Even with this class, there may be instances where this method is not a matter of choice but of circumstances. But where it is merely a matter of choice, the motives being, as I have said, simply ease, or convenience, or a morbid fondness for society destroying all relish for home delights, there ensues an amount of evil which cannot be dwelt upon here, even if it can be suggested. I merely say, as it appears to me, that a shanty which you can call your own home, is better than a palace frequented by everybody; which is like lodging on the house-top, and eating in the street. Especially do children, in the young and tender blade, need the dew of domestic influences, and

furrowed privacy. They flourish not so well in the garish sunlight, at the roadside.

The *ends* for which the family was instituted indicate its *claims*. I have already shown that whatever really tends to call out the best qualities of the individual, constitutes one of these ends. Here, then, we find the claim of *maternal duty*, and this I must say is a claim which is not always answered even by those whose hearts seem full of maternal love. Nay, how often is a mother's duty to her children weakened by the unconsidered excess of a mother's love. How common are the fond eyes that will see no wrong, the ingenious affection that excuses every fault, the indiscriminate tenderness that with lavish indulgence spoils the "mother's darling."

On the other hand, how often are the tendrils of domestic welfare crushed by the hard, cold forms of etiquette. Fashionable indolence, fashionable frivolity, fashionable custom, commits to the servant or the nurse, opportunities and influences that should be filled with a mother's presence, and come only from a mother's heart. The child will grow, the child will learn to think and feel. Whence shall come the breath of its very life, and the incentives by which it unfolds for good or evil? There is a neglect in homes which is not a necessity of poverty. We speak of "abandoned children!" There are abandoned children living under frescoed ceilings, and on rich carpets. There are vices which grow rank in indulgence, as well as in terrible need. And fashionable matrons, as well as pauper mothers—those because they *will not* do their

duty, these because they *cannot*—may sit down and mourn for their ruined sons. But how trite a truth is it to say—that the noblest souls which have ever been launched into this world, have had mothers to stand by them, receiving them as a sacred charge from God. And, in their highest achievements, in noble effort and successful enterprise, in senates and on battle-fields, up the steep of intellectual triumph, and in the foremost rank of moral work, they hear the mother's voice and feel the pressure of her hand.

In speaking of the family relation, I alluded also to the love and care of a father's heart. And this also indicates a claim. The most exaggerated conception of a mother's influence cannot furnish any reason for a father's neglect. With all that she may do, the home that does not feel his living sympathy is *not* a home. Cares, enterprises, arduous toil, cannot cancel the purpose for which God setteth the solitary in families. A man has no right to let his entire heart melt away in business, and carry none of it home with him. And if he ought not to make his counting-room his home, neither has he any right to make his home a counting-room, dusky with the cares of profit and loss and vexing speculations. There never was a business interest yet that ought to put out the light on the hearth-stone, or disarm a father in the midst of his children of kindness, cheerfulness, hope and faith.

The evils of which I have spoken in relation to a mother's duties, appear equally in the neglect of paternal obligations, but you perceive that I am merely touching the springs of suggestion here, not dwelling

upon a list of topics that might occupy a volume. And remember what I said before. I am not speaking of gross violations of domestic duty—of violent desecrations of the family tie. I am not speaking of drunken mothers, and brutal fathers, or of places that go by the name of “home” that are merely the portals of Pandemonium. I am not referring to miserable, abject homes, where the mists of ignorance and sin hang low and dark, where poverty stands at the door, and hunger sits on the hearth-stone. I am speaking of the common class of homes, where we may look for the most hopeful issues, or in the neglect of whose ordinary duties the saddest results will spring up. And I entreat each of you to inquire—“What is home to *me*?” “What do I make of it?”

Young man! young woman! What do *you* make of it? You have not been left to grow up in your solitary individuality, but have been set in families. Here is a better school than any outside the walls—a school for more momentous results, inasmuch as moral are higher than intellectual ends. Here is a school for filial duty, and for mutual help. Here is a school for that child-like reliance and reverence, which is becoming rare among us. Real children now are hard to find, and we are having instead crops of little men and little women. It is a sad thing, I think, to see such hasty growths as these, such a slackening of decent reverence and order,—and it all calls for our earnest attention to the faults and neglects at home.

Nay, my hearers, let me ask you each and all, Is home a place of serious thought, as well as of love and

gladness? Have you any altar there? Do you sprinkle it with prayer? Is it over-arched by the conscious presence of God? Is it brightened by His benediction? Is it hallowed by consecration to Him? Do we feel that He is its founder and its strength—He who “setteth the solitary in families?” Do we realize what home is, and what it is appointed to be? Do we think of the mystic seeds of life there planted? Of the solemn spiritual growth that there goes on? Do we improve its trials and experiences in their full meaning? Do we comprehend the significance of the communions that are brightened by its fire-lights, of the shadowy memories that fresco its walls? Is it a little thing to us that the cry of birth has been heard beneath its roof, that the mystery of death has descended into its chambers? Is there no solemnity as well as gladness in the relations of husband and wife, of father and mother—a solemnity that links time to eternity, and earth with heaven? When we realize it, is not home full of incentives, full of voices calling us to duty and love, to faith and prayer? Ye, whom God has set in families, for *what* has He placed you there? What answer, by your own individual thought and action, do you make to this question?

III. The relation of the family to society at large, is a theme of such magnitude that I can only indicate it in the closing portion of this discourse. I look upon home as the foundation of whatever may grow up in our present social conditions, or in the ideal society of the future. We have seen what ends are

served by the family institution in developing the life of the individual. But this does not reveal the only reason why the solitary have been set in families. As the organism of the individual prefigures something beyond itself, so the organism of the family prefigures something beyond itself—even the structure of a true society. The home, so important in itself, loses much of its essential significance, if its offices of mutual love and mutual help end in itself. Family affection, family interest, family pride, are too often synonymous with an intense and offensive selfishness. But in the normal exercise of these duties and affections, man is educated for a wider range of service and for world-wide sympathies. The best schemes of social usefulness, the noblest public life, is developed out of these family sanctities. The roots of philanthropy, patriotism, religion, are watered by the springs of home. Here the true idea of society is symbolized. The best achievements of civilization are but extensions of the family relations, realized in paternal government and human brotherhood.

Therefore in our action at home we find not only the immediate claims of family life, but of social order and welfare. It is not necessary for me to show how many remedies for social evils are to be applied here. I only urge the two-fold aspect of the question. As members of families, our interest in society centres in the fact that social customs upon which we act, which we help make up, react upon ourselves and our children, and that we send out from the home incalculable influences for good or evil into the world, and

into the future. At the altar and the hearth-stone we grasp the round earth, we touch all ages.

God has set the solitary in families ; and in that institution are enclosed the greatest results of earth and heaven. With a vision sufficiently clear we might see in the germ the full circle of the flower ; in the acorn the branching oak, with five hundred summers murmuring in its leaves. So in the ground and seed-plot of home we may have pre-vision of the best conditions of this world or the other. From this we build up images of that which no mere definite speech can express. The fairest social state will appear, when "our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth ;" and "our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." And, linking our homeliest work, our closest love, with wider and more enduring scenes, we speak of "the FAMILY in heaven and earth."

IX.

Working and Waiting.

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready where-with I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

LUKE XVII. 7-10.

MY remarks in the present discourse will be drawn from the general scope of this passage, and therefore I have taken the entire illustration which our Saviour uses here. In these words He sets forth our relations and our obligations to God—our obligations of patient and reverent *service*. And thus, as it appears to me, Christ answers a problem. For there may be some who are disposed to reason to this effect: "God," they may say, "has called us into existence without our own will. He has placed us in this world and surrounded us with these conditions. Is He not, then,

bound to provide for us? Does the mere fact of our creation involve obligation on our part? Or, speaking from the highest moral ground, is there not an obligation on the part of the Deity respecting us?"

Now to this question there *is* an answer in the condition of things. God *does* see to our general well-being. He has abundantly provided for us. He perpetually ministers to us. And though instances of suffering and misery so widely prevail, these grow out of conditions absolutely necessary to the highest scheme of being. But these natural premises being assumed, the question comes up—What is our rightful attitude towards God? What should be the attitude not merely of a servant towards his master, but even of a child towards a parent?

Christ answers this question in the passage before us. The answer is, that we are to *work* and to *wait*. We are to refer our ends to God's ends; and doing all we can that is right, and good, and true, still we must feel that we do no more than our duty. We only then fulfil the purpose of our being. Over and above our positive obligations we make nothing, and in no way do we put God in debt to us.

This is the substance of the answer which occurs when we set ourselves to inquire—"What is the end of life? What ideas and what results does it involve? Am I to consider this end as fulfilled only in that which serves *me*?—which immediately benefits, or at least gratifies *myself*? Or, independent of all other considerations, regardless of my own immediate interest or welfare, am I obligated, first of all, to serve

truth, righteousness, goodness—in other words, God ? ” This you perceive is a very practical point, running very deep into our modes of thought and action.

Now I need not dwell upon the way in which men often answer this question. I need not tell you how apt they are to test all things by their own standard. Thus—some man finds his course of existence troubled. Disappointment and calamity fall into his lot. And straitway he begins to arraign Providence. The entire universe becomes a dark web of mystery—simply because *he* is troubled. He makes himself the standard ; he starts and measures from this little selfish centre ; forgetting that things are not to be tried by this test, but by general ends,—God’s ends. Another man shrinks from the claims of duty, and shrinks from them because they involve *personal* loss and suffering—overlooking the fact that the single question to ask is—“*Is it duty?*” If so, we must respond to the call, and leave consequences with God—for we are here to do His work, and wait upon His movements. The conclusion, then, is plain, that our view of life, our view of events, our entire course of thought and action, will be profoundly affected by the fact whether we regard things in this selfish light, or whether we take our interpretation from the spirit of the passage before us—where the servant who has been working then waits—and still observing his master’s will, does no more than he was bound to do.

This is the general train of thought awakened by the lesson in the text. Let us now proceed to consider some specific suggestions growing out of it. We may notice.

- I. The suggestion of Faith.
- II. Of patient Waiting.
- III. Of Humility.

I. In the first place, then, here is the suggestion of *Faith*. These verses, as I conceive, are not disconnected with those which immediately precede them. Christ had been teaching the doctrine of forgiveness. He told His disciples if a brother trespassed against them seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turned again, saying—"I repent!" they were to forgive him. Upon this they cried out, "Lord, increase our faith." He answered them by describing the *power* of faith, and then proceeds with the illustration before us. It appears, then, that by this simile He meant to illustrate the *duty* of faith—faith in God, faith in Christ—the *obligation* to cherish this in the most trying conditions. How *could* they forgive a brother seven times, and seventy times seven? They could not do it, if they referred merely to their own will, to their own selfish impulses. But they would be enabled to do this if they deferred to the Divine will; if they gathered strength in faithful obedience to the injunction of the Saviour. And this much they were *bound* to do, because they were God's servants; and the servant must not work his own will, but his master's.

And now I urge upon you this truth—that faith is not merely a *privilege*. It is a *duty*. We are to cherish it as a duty, looking away from ourselves with obedience and resignation to the Divine will. That faith is worth little that does not summon up in our

souls the energies of obedience and deference. In fact, mere quiet belief and acceptance can hardly be called "faith" at all. The acquiescent Christianity of our churches and institutions ; the Christianity that says—"Lord, we believe," but never was so keenly pressed by a doubt as to cry out—"Help thou our unbelief,"—is a very different thing from Christian faith. "Lord, we believe!" cry the respectable congregation, rank after rank, pew after pew, as the sonorous prayers echo in their ears ; as the pious homily patters upon their drowsy souls. "Lord, we believe all this, amen!" as decorous and prudent people ought to do, and then go forth to show that we do not believe a word of it. "Lord, we believe!" in solemn uniformity of faith ; as rows of waxen people might, with glassy eyes and mechanical nod of affirmation. "We believe that Thy religion is one of great spiritual interests and lofty self-sacrifice," and, so believing, we live for ourselves alone ; we buy and sell and get gain, without regard to the moral quality of our dealing. Buy anything that will pay ; sell anything that is profitable ; bodies, souls, hearts, principles and reputation—worshipping the one ideal of worldly good. "Lord, we believe!—believe what is said, that Thou art holy and Thy law supreme ;" and, professing thus to believe, we reverence nothing. We hold all Divine sanctions secondary to political aggrandizement and personal ambition. We regard no right but the right of might. We own no authority but the desire of our own hearts. We repudiate Thy image in humanity for the image on the dollar. We exclude the thought of Thee from senate-


chambers, and bid Thy oracles be dumb even in the churches. "Lord, we believe!—believe that Thy Son has revealed Thy universal Fatherhood, and the brotherhood of all men; and, as the very heart and life of His Religion, set forth the great element of charity;" and, believing this, we indulge in strife and hatred. We wrap ourselves in bigotry and pride. We turn with horror from the common and the unclean. We hurl scorn upon the shamed and the abandoned. Clothed in comfort, we disbelieve in human sorrow, and with the rattle of our haughty chariot wheels we drown the moaning of that sea of misery that swelters all around us. Yes, "we believe," because it is *easy* to believe. We believe that Thou art good, for we are comfortable. We believe in a future state, for it does not trouble our present. We believe in Christ; we believe in the Bible; because we have so been taught, and it is easier for us to believe than not to believe.

But now, suppose some blow smites your prosperity, and leaves you beaten and bruised among your shattered hopes. Suppose your "faith" threatens to cost you something. Suppose the faith required is faith in spite of your own ease. Suppose something occurs that sends a ripple of doubt over your smooth and glossy acquiescence; and for the first time you begin to feel the pressure of some reality that makes you cry out, "Lord, help Thou my unbelief!"—*then* you will learn the difference between mere *assent* and genuine, strenuous *faith*.

True faith is born in a *struggle*. It is that which is

tried, and *then* is not found wanting. It is something which we maintain despite the disappointment of our purposes, despite ourselves. It moves us to toil on, even though we see no good springing out of our effort, and enables us singly and reverently to recognize God's will, and so to serve and wait. This was the kind of faith those early disciples needed. They were expecting an immediate and conspicuous triumph of the Messiah. They were looking for His speedy entrance into His kingdom. They were saying—"Lord, we have forsaken houses, lands, parents, children, wives; and what shall we have therefor?" They were desiring to sit one on the right hand of Jesus, another on his left. And when these splendid visions began to melt away into the cold reality; when they began to apprehend the long lapse of sorrow and of struggle that lay between themselves and their crowns; when the real character of their mission broke upon them, and such difficult precepts as this respecting forgiveness revealed the conflict that must take place within as well as without; they exclaimed, "Increase our faith." And then they were told what that faith is—a postponement of selfish ends; a deference to the divine will, serving God, waiting upon Him until He shall make known His own good time and way.

And, therefore, this must be the character of our faith as well as theirs. Faith in the season of sunshine is *no* faith. It is but an easy tradition, or decent assent. But to hold on when clouds and darkness are round about us, and our hearts feel the pressure of a terrible mystery—this indeed is faith's victory. To



cling to the true thing, to do the right thing, when evidently it is the best policy to do so, is well enough, but in such conduct there is no *energy* of faith. To perform the righteous act and stand by the truth when there comes no immediate reward, when for ourselves only sorrow and suffering come, but still to stand firm and act, because we mean to serve God and no mere standard or policy of our own—this is something very different from formal assent, this is genuine faith.

And it is only a truism to say, that the spring of such faith is the recognition of the divine will as supreme, and of our selfish ends as merged in God's ends. Then in our own immediate and personal suffering there is no mystery; at least, there is nothing to make us doubt or fail because the right seems to be a suffering or losing cause. Have a faith to toil, and a faith to wait, looking in ourselves for nothing else; like the servant who, when he comes in from the field, girds himself and attends upon his master, and in all this merits no thanks, doing only the things that are commanded him.

II. In the next place, the text yields the suggestion of patient *waiting*. Work for God is the idea, and then wait upon God. Now, I ask, is it not easier to do the former than the latter? Is it not easier to work than to wait? Calm, patient faith is labor.

"They also serve who stand and wait."

A man may be quite willing to do the work of duty, and yet if he does not immediately discover the pro-

ceeds of that work he begins to fret and complain. How many are there, for instance, who are sceptical respecting the claims of principle, if the benefit of obedience to it does not immediately enure to themselves. They quote the maxim, "Honesty is the best policy," and have come to the conclusion that the maxim is true. They are convinced that it is better to do right than to do wrong. Sometimes, however, it may appear that honesty is not the best *policy*. Sometimes the right is balked and defeated while the wrong is successful. What then? Is there any less claim upon them, and upon all men, to keep still the honest post, and to do the right thing? We are to be honest not for the benefit that accrues to ourselves, but because it is *right* to be honest.

Let me ask, then, are we not apt to look for some immediate benefit in duty, some direct and speedy good to ourselves, as offset, or wages, for all our worldly sacrifices? How long am I prepared, how long are you or other men prepared, for the sake of pure, abstract principle, to sustain "the tug of war," and to support it while it continues to be a losing game?

My brethren, we are fond enough of the *spectacle* of valorous duty—fond of the *romance* of principle, when we can see it delineated upon some great world-wide canvas, while we sit comfortably still to look at it. Then we say—"Duty is a grand thing, and especially is it a grand thing when men hold on and suffer for it, and patiently wait for its postponed victory; not knowing whether in their time it will gain a victory

at all—only they are conscious that it is duty, and they suffer and wait on this account alone.” Permit me to illustrate this by an instance taken from our own history. There was no battle, no splendid success, in our Revolutionary war, which yields such inspiration as that winter of dismay and suffering, when the little army of Washington crouched naked and starving in their miserable huts, sleeping in the frost on the “cold, bleak hill,” and with the blood of their bare feet printing the snows of Valley Forge. No victory to cheer them ; no shock of conflict to arouse them ; there was nothing to hold them together but the simple bond of fidelity. To make that hungry, ragged group the most glorious picture in our Revolutionary annals, there was nothing but the splendor of devotion to a principle that absorbed all personal considerations. Had success actually been in their hands, it would have been comparatively easy to suffer for the possession of it. Or even if they could have been struggling for success in “the heady currents of a fight,” the object might have seemed near enough to warm and inspire them. But to stand, as it seemed, far off from the victory ; to see in that leaden winter sky no rift of promise ; instead of the drums that should summon them to conflict and therefore to hope, to hear only the wind rattling through the naked woods, and to behold in that waste of snow as it were the winding-sheet of liberty ; and yet to stand with their frozen feet unflinching at their posts, believing that in some way the right would triumph, at least believing that right is right ; waiting upon God’s will

now *they* had done all they could—it is this that makes that episode of 1778 so sublime.

Yes, this is a great thing when represented on the historical canvas ; it is a great thing anywhere, because it is not an easy thing to do. Man will fight for principle, he will sacrifice for principle ; but it is a harder matter to *wait* for principle. It is a trial of our moral and religious strength to do the right thing, and see no immediate or palpable good growing out of it. And I say we can do this only as we recognize the fact that we are *bound* to duty ; that it is a higher will than our own we are serving, and therefore we are to work and wait, not fretting about results. Work for God, and then wait upon God.

We must learn to wait upon God so far as results are for His own glory, and for the vindication of His sovereignty. We must not grow peevish because justice is balked and truth retarded in the world. Act for justice, speak the truth, toil in the furrows of Providential opportunity—that is *our* part. But let us not confound devotion to God's service with the vanity of personal success. Sometimes the Divine indications say to us plainly—" Work ;" sometimes they say—" Gird yourselves, and wait upon me." And for this patient waiting upon God's processes, we sometimes need indeed to *gird* ourselves far more than for active effort.

Now all this does not imply that we should ever stop working in a good cause. Waiting does not always imply stopping ; especially does it not imply indolence and indifference. Some men lose their

interest in a great and good cause, unless they are continually in the froth of excitement. It becomes us to feel that delay may be only a quiet process, and waiting a strenuous service. But we must not be too hasty in anticipating the triumph of a good cause. We should not expect to see all in our own day, and to behold the harvest immediately springing up in places where we have driven the plough and sown the seed. Do you expect with one stroke of the hammer, or with all the hammering you may make, to shatter the great gates of sin, and let in the millennial daylight at a single burst? It is none of your business whether that victory comes now or a hundred years ahead. Work and wait, that is your office. Providential results are sure, but Providential processes seem slow. God's work is a long husbandry. All history is the process; a work of ploughing and sowing, and harrowing and weeding, and weeping and sweating, ay, even of blood and tears. Paul plants, and Apollos waters. Other men labor, we enter into their labors. The long, broad field, widening and lengthening through the ages! But God gives, and God himself takes the increase. Go out into the field and work, O man, in your day and generation. Do something for truth and righteousness. But fret not because all is not done at once. Come in when the sun goes down; come in when the arm grows weak; come in old, bowed head, whitened with still unsuccessful toil—come in and gird yourself, and wait upon Divine Providence now that you *have* toiled. The process will go on. The harvest is sure. Yours was

to work, not rejoice. Yours was the spade, not the sickle.

And, surely, if our work is thus only an item in a process, it is a great consolation to think that it is a part of a process, unfolding from day to day, with every rising and setting sun, with every waxing and waning moon, with every advancing and receding age. It helps us to take right views of righteous work. It prevents our being crotchety and impracticable. Some men who stand fast in a good cause, stand *too fast*. They will not consent to carry out a part of their work, unless they can carry out the whole of it at the same time. The right thing must be done all at once, or nothing right must be done. Now, looking over the field of Providential labor, the view is broad,—but “the eye sees further than the hand can reach,” and our progress over that field is step by step. Let our *aim* be the largest possible, let our *act* be the best available. Let us keep aiming and shooting; but let us not keep aiming without shooting, even though we have to shoot low. We wish to despoil evil of all its armor, but it is no compromise to take from it a single weapon, when we can take that, and when we can take no more. It is great folly, folly springing out of the notion that *we* have all the work to do, and the final victory to win,—it is great folly to refuse any concession from the wrong, because it will not yield all at once. It is a stubborn conflict, this conflict between good and evil in the world. The latter may not be defeated at one sweep. But whenever it gives way a single foot, advance and take it!

For our work is to do so much in the Providential process—as much as we can, if not as much as we would—doing God's work as far as He gives us to do, and waiting upon Him for results.

And so our interest in the great work of truth and righteousness does not terminate with the limit of our own lives. It does not slacken when we are borne helpless from the field. Were we destined to immortality upon earth, our regards and solitudes might centre in ourselves, but now we bequeath them to those who will come after us; we weave our heart-strings in among the corporate humanity, and live in the entire race. Part of a long host are we. To-day in the rear rank of generations who have marched onward, to-morrow in the front rank of generations that are yet to come. The grand army of God and humanity! Passing the sacred standard from hand to hand, from age to age, inspired by a hereditary trust and mindful of a common cause. We cannot help having an interest in those who are to follow, because they are to carry forward the achievement in which we have been engaged. So, let us do God's work without impatience as to results, waiting for His own good time and way.

Moreover, let me say that this is a doctrine for our own personal and private conduct, as well as for our action in the world at large. How much strength we may derive from this method of working and waiting, in all deferring to the divine will! For this is only another way of saying—Obey your own conscience, and take consequences with patience. Hear what the

divine voice within you says, heed it, and then let the world without say what it will. Act as an obedient servant of God, waiting upon Him in these authentic utterances of the soul, and your responsibility is discharged. Let the world abuse you ; let the world lie about you ; let all external good be confiscated. Do you just stand in this obedient attitude, conscious of the approval of the Divine Master, and live it all down. Live down the lies, and shame the abuse, and vindicate to the world what the world cannot help respecting—the presence of an upright, God-sustained spirit. And do this not out of regard to self, but out of deference to the supreme will, because it is your *duty* to do it.

III. I will urge upon you one other lesson drawn from the text. It is the lesson of *humility*. “Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do.”

In all the conduct of man there is no lawful occasion for *pride*. For of what has he a right to be proud? Analyze the root and ground of any such feeling, and test its authenticity. The moment the conception set forth in the text flashes upon us—the conception of ourselves as servants and dependents of a Divine Master—that moment all our pretensions vanish. I ask—what do we own, what do we acquire, that we should be proud of? Is it of what we have received from others? Some men have a pride of birth, a pride of

family. Because their fathers did something, they transfer an hereditary merit to themselves, and strut before the world in a peacock vanity of crests and emblazonry. But if that ancestral achievement was really meritorious it *cannot* be transferred. Its glory was in the self-conscious doing, not in the superficial renown; and it is all the more a rebuke to these that they have done nothing themselves, and are only living upon what their fathers did; mere parasite moths, clinging to old embroideries and feeding upon heraldic cloth! Pride of birth! God made them as He made the poorest drudge out of common clay. And, as to environments, the Kingliest Being ever born in the flesh lay in a manger. What a miserable thing to see clay in brocade and velvet, shrugging its shoulders at clay in coarse woolen and with black thumbs!

Or, are we proud of external graces—merely *external*, nothing more? Beauty of person, or symmetry of form? Then we are proud of something which has no moral value, and that is not exclusively human. We have no more reason for pride than the lily of the field has, that neither toils nor spins.

Are we proud of what we have gained, or of what we have done? Is it our wealth? Do we say—"We have made it, in the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows?" How made it, my friend? Whence came the skill of the busy brain, the cunning of the right hand, the blessing of robust health. All these things,—are they not munificent donations from the Master of all? talents lent, not exclusively our own?

Or are we possessed with pride of intellect? Why

should we be proud of this any more than of those external gifts and graces? For our employment of it we are responsible, the capacity itself is not our own achievement. Or if it is what we have acquired by exercise of the intellect, be assured we acquire very little that is good or great in the spirit of rampant pride. We only gain knowledge by humble study, and stooping low. All scientific research is waiting upon God. It is patient looking to see what He reveals in this wondrous book of the heavens and the earth. This is the condition of all truth. It is abrogation of mere self—it is humility.

Thus you perceive that every legitimate foundation of pride seems to be torn from beneath our feet. No shred of it can we cling too, except, perhaps, upon one point. We may possibly be proud of the good we do. Proud of our alliance even with the Divine Benefactor, in diffusing help and blessedness abroad. But now see how this too—this the last, the most subtle basis of pride—see how this is stricken away by the fact set forth in the text—"We have done no more than was our duty to do." "We are unprofitable servants." We have *made* nothing for God, so to speak. We have done nothing that we have not been commissioned to do. We have given nothing that we have not received. And I need not add, that the more we advance in moral effort, the clearer we perceive this truth. The highest are always the most humble. Those who see widest are most aware of what is yet to be done. And so the lesson of all true working and waiting is the lesson of *humility*.

One observation in closing. I must call your attention to the fact that by the very process thus indicated—the process of working for God and waiting upon God—our own highest welfare really *is* ensured. After we have served we may sup. We partake, after all, of the divine feast, and the result is far better for us than if we had obeyed our own selfish impulses, and sought immediate gratification.

By that very discipline of service and of waiting, our own best powers are unfolded, our spiritual nature is exalted, and we go in to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all true servants of God.

For see what this very working and waiting does in itself imply. This postponement of selfish desires for something higher, implies our alliance with something higher. It implies that the worker and waiter is not a mere machine that works blindly, that waits unconsciously—that he is not a mere animal whose outlook is confined to this horizon of time and sense. It indicates a capacity of spiritual force, a fitness for immortal life, in the right use and apprehension of which the servant becomes a son. The office of a servant, patiently held and faithfully discharged, trains and educates him to a free and filial heirship.

So let every one of us stand in the posture of reverence and of service towards God, working and waiting, in faith and patience, and humility. Work and wait, O sufferer for conscience' sake! O man in the toil of duty! Work and wait, O ye disheartened and sorrowing! From your point of view all is mystery, but refer everything to Him who is the master

of all. Work and wait, my brethren, remembering that with the best we do, we are unprofitable servants.

Yet even this unprofitable service He rewards with munificent grace. He make it the vehicle of our own highest blessedness. And after all our working and our waiting, He permits us to eat bread in His heavenly kingdom.

X.

Trust.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.—PROVERBS III. 5.

THESE few words contain a great deal. They involve the most important and practical truth that can be urged upon the mind of man. Indeed, I may say that they exhibit the very essence of *religion*. I mean religion as distinguished from mere philosophical belief, or from practical morality. In the course of my remarks, I shall have occasion to show that the roots of religious life and of moral conduct are the same. But this, I repeat, is especially the element of religion, its very spirit—*trust*—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart."

In the present discourse, then, let us in the first place consider this principle of trust as constituting the *spirit* and *power* of religion; and, in the second place, consider its relation to some of the special *characteristics* of religion.

I. It may be that many of you have been perplexed with the question—"Why this strenuous demand for faith?"—for I use faith and trust here as synonymous

terms—"Why this strong demand for faith, or trust? Why is such a peculiar excellence, or supremacy, assigned to this quality?" For instance, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth in glorious array those personages who were remarkable for their faith; and declares that without this sublime trust it is impossible to please God. Whence, then, this prominence, we may say this almost solitary honor, assigned to faith—its exhibition as the very sum and essence of religion? We may suggest that the importance of this sentiment is owing to the greatness of its objects. Why, then, are not these rather objects of *sight*? Why has God always hidden Himself from human eyes? Why does He call upon His children to trust in an unseen Being? Why has He visited the souls of men only in faint suggestions; or in motions of His greatness behind these dim, material veils? Or, instead of His audible word and manifest presence, why have we now only revelations that tell us *about* Him? And oh! why are not these spiritual realities and spiritual glories which are peculiarly associated with Him, things of open vision? Why do we not *see* those supreme facts which command our obedience, and those immortal delights towards which we stretch our longing desires?

I appeal here to your own consciousness. I ask, if in your minds there has not often arisen a wish that the things of faith might be things of sight? Have you not desired to behold with open vision, at least the fringe of that glory which, concealed by the drapery of time and sense, encircles our world of mortal care?

Now the general answer to these suggestions appears in the fact that through faith we derive a *culture*, or *discipline*, for our higher nature ; which culture or discipline is incompatible with sight. But more specifically I observe, and in the present discourse propose to illustrate, that that peculiar phase of faith which is called "Trust in God," is connected with the deepest springs of our personal life, and with its noblest developments.

And I begin my illustration of this point by observing, that the radical evil of atheism—I speak now not merely of *speculative* but of *practical* atheism,—atheism of the heart and life—the radical evil of atheism is the moral and spiritual loss it creates by removing the sources of a lofty trust, an inspiring and uplifting dependence upon something higher and better than ourselves. Long ago it was said by Lord Bacon, that "Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favor, gathereth a force and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain ; therefore," continues he, "as atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this, that it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty." And it must be evident to you, that all our growth comes from looking and clinging to that which is above and beyond ourselves. Indeed, just consider for a moment how this law of *dependence* runs all through the material world, and each thing in nature is helped and blessed by it. Nothing is complete in itself. Nothing contains in itself all the resources of its own welfare. Each thing trusts in something else—the root that

clings to the soil ; the flower that struggles to the light ; the wild bird in its nest ; and " the cattle upon a thousand hills." Land and sea hold each other in the embrace of mutual need. The broad woods lean to the evening wind, and spread out their myriad leaves in supplication for the rain. The sacred order of the family—is it not bound together by the law of dependence ? Through his trust in a father's wisdom and a mother's love, the child grows into the experience and is trained for the work of life. And as nothing is so beautiful and so safe for it as its humble reliance, its calm rest in those encircling arms—so nothing is so odious and so dangerous as the attitude of the young man who has grown, or, rather, *lapsed*, into self-confidence, and drops the curb of restraint while he runs away with the reins. Oh ! that is the great period of temptation in life, that is the hour of humiliating and fatal downfalls,—when a young man confounds growth in stature with growth in soul, and sees nothing on earth that seems higher or that knows more than himself. The wise man grows in wisdom through a healthy self-distrust—not morbid self-depreciation—but, I say, healthy self-distrust. By humility and lowly confidence he climbs the intellectual heights, and emerges into broader fields of truth. Always do we need to recognize something higher and greater, in order that we ourselves may become higher and greater ; and it is with the inspiration of trust that we cling to it and rise by it.

We may conceive, then, what man's condition would be, if in all this universe he could recognize nothing

higher and better than himself, and could discover nothing without him, or in contact with him, but material processes. Nor could the aid which he receives from beings like himself—aid similar to that which comes from the dependence of one thing upon another in the natural world—satisfy his wants, or solve the problems of his existence. For his true development, his strength, his peace, man needs the assurance of an infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, conscious of him and sympathizing with him—and he finds this when he trusts in the Lord with all his heart. And I say Atheism, whether it be of the speculative or the practical sort, is sufficiently refuted by the bare fact that it breaks up the ground of this necessary trust. Arguing from the very structure of our being, from the demands of our life, there must be a God and Father in heaven,—the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

And the point which I especially urge is this—that the efficacy of this quality is in the very fact that it is *trust*, not open vision. What conditions might coëxist with such vision I do not pretend to say. Even then, even in the possession of full sight, it is evident that man would still feel his dependence upon God. But then there would be no room for what we specially call trust, for that implies something connected with its object that is unseen, unrealized. We can conceive of a state of things in which all truth would be revealed at once to the intellect, and expand in one glorious surface before its gaze. But we cannot conceive of such a state of things coëxisting with anything like

intellectual *progress*, or mental *discipline*. No more can we conceive of a condition of open sight respecting God and spiritual realities coëxisting with the personal freedom and the self-precipitation implied in a genuine act of trust. For then it would not involve the discipline of trust ; it would be the compelled acknowledgment of sight. Every wise father knows the benefit of educating his child to have *confidence* in him—to put forth voluntary trust in his promises and his character. But all this benefit would be lost—there would not be any such thing as trust—if there were not something hidden, something not yet given or fully made known. It is a blessed thing that a child should confidently walk by his father's side, and put forth his hand to his father's hand ; not for what that father *does*, but for what he believes that father *is*.

So, in the relations of man to the Infinite Father, there is a beneficial discipline in the exercise of his confidence, in the putting forth of trust, which could not be were he living in a universe of open sight. So something in this great scheme is not yet given, or fully revealed ; something is hidden. Truth is like the compass, valuable just where there is no visible object, no guiding light ; then with trembling assurance still pointing to the star that shines, fixed and eternal, above the changeful waves and beyond the clouds.

This, then, is the answer to those who wonder why religion is so essentially identified with faith, or trust, and who ask why the great objects of this trust are not objects of instant vision. This is why it constitutes the very *spirit* and *power* of religion.

II. But, in the next place, let us proceed to consider this principle of trust in its relations to some of the special *characteristics* of religion. There are two or three of these characteristics involving this principle of trust, to which I will now call your attention. These are

I. Obligation.

II. Incitement.

III. Consolation.

Or, we may call these

I. Devotion.

II. Power.

III. Calmness.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.” Let us see how a practical compliance with this injunction bears upon each of these characteristics.

In the first place, then, I ask you to consider how necessary this sentiment of trust is to all genuine *devotion*. By this term “devotion,” here, I signify two things. I include under this head, *obedience*, and also *worship* and *supplication*.

I maintain that without trust in the Lord there can be no efficient moral service. Now I will not go so far as to say that even an atheist cannot be a man of correct moral deportment. But I do say that in the atheist's *theory* there is no sanction binding him to absolute morality. That is, the sources of his morality are not—according to his own confession they cannot be—from *above*, but from *beneath*. To his view, there is no infinite law-giver out from the realm of transcendent authority revealing the eternal right.

There is only a sphere of expediency; and this is all enclosed within considerations of his own personal well-being, and perhaps certain social harmonies in the world about him. The claims of obedience and rectitude all come from the demands of his own organism, from his own animal instincts and his selfish nature. His morality is based on physiology; since, agreeably to his theory, there is nothing in himself or others more to be respected than matter, and the laws and forces of matter. If he is a prudent man he will not indulge to excess, because that will damage his physical system, and perhaps extinguish his animal life—the only life which, as he says, he has. It is probable that he will not injure his neighbor, because, in the first place, he has generous sympathies, and, in the next place, the injury may rebound upon himself. His decalogue, therefore, is physiological; carved in protuberances on the skull, or written in the foldings of the nerves. His golden rule is the line of selfish prudence. His kingdom of heaven—for every man *must* have some kind of a kingdom of heaven—is discovered by the dissecting-knife and the stethoscope, and is maintained by a system of dietetics. Men are often better than their creed, and I do not affirm that he will act upon the doctrine that morality is merely expediency, or that an undetected wrong is as good as the right. But I merely say that in consistency with his theory morality and expediency *are* identical, and there is no absolute right or wrong. There is no lofty Sinai towering above the cloud-canopy of this world, from which the law comes down through trumpet blasts and light-

nings ; but only a plain of sensuous reality, upon which we may build our altars of impulse, and worship, if we will, the golden calf.

But I am disposed to be just upon this point. I cannot see that this system of physiological and social prudence is essentially much lower than what has been fitly styled "other-worldliness." The only difference being that, in the one case, a man regulates his conduct by *earthly* things in a selfish way ; and in the other case he regulates his conduct by *heavenly* things in a selfish way. The principles of the one are literal loaves and fishes, and the principles of the other are spiritual loaves and fishes. Now the man who belongs to the first of these two classes lives consistently. He says there is no other world than this, he believes there is no other world than this, and he makes the best out of his conditions that they are capable of. The other says, "There is *another* world;" he professes to believe that there is ; and then makes its sanctions just as worldly in spirit as if they were all "of the earth *earthly*." The man who lives up to the standard of expediency, believing in nothing higher, makes the most he can of this world ; but the other makes the least of that higher world whose real sanctions are not in external rewards, but in the intrinsic blessedness of goodness, and in the interior life and glory of divine, self-sacrificing love.

Let me ask, where is the sharp distinction between those who speculatively maintain an atheistic theory, out of which the morality of expediency is logically *inferred*, and those who exhibit a practice in which that

kind of morality actually *appears*. Surely, if we draw a distinction at all, it should be in favor of the former. For the latter, alas! have fallen into the slough of positive atheistic consequences. Whatever their professions, their conduct shows that they have no real trust in the Lord, but in their own selfish expedencies, seeking the loaves and fishes without the consecrating blessing, and worshipping the golden calf all the years of their lives. How many men in business are there, who steer by their ledgers; and who virtually act upon the principle of making money in any way that they can! How many politicians, eloquent in the cause of liberty, whose regard for freedom is the regard of an owl for the daylight! How many like these are there who really have any Sinai, or any decalogue, higher than some official chair, or more vivid than the stamp on a gold eagle! How many of these have ever consciously looked up, and said, and realized what they were saying—"We trust in the Lord!"

And, again, is there any very high fence between such as these, and still another class who would say, "Morality is not a matter of trust, but simply of *acquiescence*. It is that which has been positively enunciated, and therefore ought to be obeyed; but which might as well be disobeyed, were it not for detection and penalty?"

He who trusts in the Lord with all his heart, believes not merely that God's moral law is *enacted*, but that it is absolute; believes that it could not be reversed; that in time and eternity it never could be different from what it is; believes that it rests not merely upon

sanctions which were they taken away would render it different, and that it might be violated without harm were it not for detection and penalty—but he believes that this moral law is essentially just and good. He loves it for itself. This man's practical morality comes from above, not from beneath—not from the realm of mere physiology, or animal instincts, or selfishness, or expediency. It is a light from the top, streaming down into his soul; down from the region of eternal light, the light in which all holy and immortal beings dwell; the light of God's own nature. This is the light which has lighted every good and true man who has acted in the world: not from rules of the sensuous nature and mere prudential considerations—not from the circle of worldly expedients—have such men drawn the strength by which they have overcome all obstacles, and the inspiration that has lifted them above all mortal frailties, and moved them to look out beyond self and beyond the limitations of the hour, and to do and suffer and die, and thus help and bless the world, and fulfil the noblest ends of man's being. Above everything else, *they* looked and trusted in the Lord with all their hearts.

Now consider, for a moment, the other form of devotion; that which more commonly goes by the name of "devotion." It is hardly necessary to say that all prayer is trust in the Lord. I merely ask you to reflect upon the power and blessedness of this act of trust. How much strength is there merely in the confidence of *human* friendship. Confidence is the very heart and life-blood of this friendship. The man in

whom we can *confide*; who in a generous and loyal temper will receive the confession of our weakness, our trouble, and our need, and help and counsel us, and keep our secret for our service,—he only is our friend. And, therefore, while intimacies are common in this world, friendships are rare.

But now here is an Infinite Friend; one who, though, indeed, He knows all our secrets far better than we can tell them—far better, indeed, than we know them ourselves—permits us to come and pour them into His all-hearing ear, to confess our frailties and our sins, to ask His counsel, and to precipitate ourselves upon His own good-will. Oh, to the soul that is actually awake, to the heart that is alive, to the nature that is familiar with the great experiences of life, what privilege is there like this—the privilege of holding communion with that near and Almighty Friend, when earthly lovers and friends are all far from us, when mortal reliances have crumbled to ashes at our feet, when the world is inclement and hostile, when no one understands us, when we are weak and poor, and cut off from all earthly communion! And yet, there are men who start shallow quibbles about prayer, and thrust their conceit of natural laws between God and the human soul. As though the deepest instincts of our humanity were restrained within the limit of physical forces, or any net-work of material conditions could shut out the access of the Divine Spirit to the spirit of man! The best answer to all objections urged against prayer is the fact, that man cannot help praying; for we may be sure that that

which is so spontaneous and ineradicable in human nature, has its fitting objects and methods in the arrangements of a boundless Providence. Yes, here is this provision made for man, that, frail and sinful as he is—a little transient speck moving among these splendors and immensities of nature—he is permitted to draw near to the very throne of Him who upholds all these, and finds in every place an audience-chamber of the Almighty. This hour how many petitions, how many cries of trust and supplication out from the depths of troubled and aspiring souls are flying aloft, like doves to their windows! How many are knocking at that gate of communion and of mercy, stretching out needy hands, who feel an inward assurance that an Infinite Hand, in turn, reaches out to them, drawing them close to the source of omnipotent succor, until they are at peace!

There are times when nothing of this world can aid us; when wealth, friends, reputation—even if we have them—cannot supply our need; when beautiful nature cannot calm or inspire us; when nothing will do but to trust in the Lord with all our heart. And in this privilege what an incentive is there for continued devotion!

But, in the next place, I ask you to consider what a strong influence is exerted by this spirit of trust in all great or worthy *action*. Every effort that man makes in advance of his present condition is made in trust. Watch the movements of the child who is learning to walk. It stretches out its hands in tottering reliance, and every step is an evolution of faith

And in the sublimest procedures of thought, and on whatever scale of moral achievement, still must man put the forward step of faith. He precipitates himself in trust when he stretches his magnificent calculus from planet to planet, or stakes his life for the truth, or flings down his gauntlet for the right in the arena of the world, even as the child does, venturing on a field no wider than the floor of his home, and to a goal as near as his mother's arms. All endeavor is inspired by trust. The spring of all great endeavor is a great trust, pushing men forward to unseen ends, away from the fastenings of custom, out into struggle and hazard and mystery. So Luther tosses the Pope's bull on the burning pile and sets Christendom on fire. So Columbus goes in his little vessel far away from known land, and finds a fresh green world behind the veil. So Hancock and Carroll, trusting in the everlasting right of freedom, and risking life, fortune, and sacred honor, strike the drum-beat that echoes around the globe. And, still rising in my statement, I say that the highest power is the highest trust—is "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart."

As an illustration of this, take some individual experience. Take perhaps the most interesting experience that can occur in a man's life. For instance, where do we find the inspiration of that great effort by which a man overcomes himself; breaks from the bondage of sinful inclination, and turns to God? Does he find that inspiration in *himself*—in his own capacity for self-control and moral progress? Alas! if he has had any deep experience of moral effort at

all, he knows how weak his best resolutions are—how vainly he struggles with fixed habits and bosom sins—how the surges of appetite dash up against the top-lights of reason, and drown the murmurs of conscience. It is his trust in the Lord that encourages him to struggle on ; the conviction that if he is faithful and does all he can in this inner life conflict, God will help him. God will hear his prayers—" Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!" " Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me !"

Nay, let me ask, What is to encourage a man in this mass of guilt and imperfection, to move in the first place? Whence shall the shamed and abandoned draw encouragement to turn and strive against the evil that is within and around them? Surely, not merely from their fellow-men. Human sympathy and help are not very plenty for such as these. The world tells the degraded man and woman but little that they do not know already. It tells them that they *are* degraded. If not in speech, at least it tells them as much in action. What is to inspire them, away down there in their utter debasement, to make one effort to rise, to take one upward step? Only that which inspired the wretched prodigal as he sat among the husks and the swine,—hope in a Father's mercy, trust in a Father's love. Let the poor outcast know that for him, for her, there is a vast sympathy wider than this outspread night-sky, nearer than this vital air, searching as the spring winds will soon be searching for the roots of flowers, and the seeds that now lie

buried under the dead and withered leaves. Let these know that even for them there is an exhaustless, waiting love, drawing nigh, stooping, touching them, in the person of Jesus Christ, saying—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart."

See the inspiration of this trust in *public* action. See what a colossal power the wrong is, hoary with the moss of ages, its pinnacles casting a far shadow over the earth, propped with conservative bastions, encircled with moats of tradition, buttressed by thrones, bastiles, banks, warehouses, churches! Who will venture to assault this ancient condition of things, and fling his defiance against its massy walls? No man in his own strength. No man who believes that *chance* rules this world. No man who believes that money, talents, policy, numbers, are stronger than truth and righteousness. No man who believes that truth and righteousness are dependent upon individuals, or generations. But he who trusts in the Lord with all his heart; who knows that there is One whose serene and steady will, flowing into events, overturns and overturns until He whose right it is shall reign.

Finally, let us consider the connection of this spirit of trust with all-enduring *peace*. The experiences of human life are many and complex; but its great rules are simple. I need not tell you—at least, I need not tell anybody who has struggled with any of life's greater trials—that there are cases when we must go thus far and can go no farther, and must then rest upon this as the upshot and conclusion of things—"Trust in the Lord." We will suppose that a man has done

all that he can in his own sphere of duty. He has thrown up all possible safe-guards. And yet he feels that he is helpless and exposed. A far mightier power girdles him about, and interferes with the issues of his being. Some other hand steers this great life-ship in which he sails. Some gulf-stream of superior intention flows into his lot. There are results which he cannot foresee ; there are intrusions that he cannot prevent. Misfortune overtakes him, misery engulfs him, poverty cramps him, disease catches him, bereavement surprises him, death will have him. Surely, my brethren, we want some philosophy of the *inevitable* ! What shall be our attitude respecting all these things ? Shall we settle down into the stern and gloomy theory of Fate ? What satisfaction is there in this ? What explanation of things ? What inspiration that will lift us above all these frailties ? Shall we live in constant anxiety and foreboding ? Shall we be all our life-time subject to bondage ? Our dearest objects are liable to be shaken and removed. Shall we cling to them in frantic despair, having no resource beyond them, or that remains when they go ? Our most tender relationships are vulnerable ; our kindred and friends are frail. Shall we be in constant dread concerning them, and have no peace in present communion ? Or shall we commit them to providential keeping, — acknowledging the infinite love that is all around them and around ourselves ? They are taken from us. Shall we fall into doubt, and in the madness of our sorrow reject all consolation ? Or shall we trust in Him who is “the God of the living,” and in that assurance know that

they live also, and thus have an anchor behind the veil.

I will not stop now with any attempt to explain why these trials exist. They *do* exist—and what then? Many of them may be our own work, and these we might alter or prevent. But I speak now of things that are inevitable. And I say, surely, if we are going to live and act, we must have some principle that will bear us above all these. We must lay hold of *something*; we must trust in something. What shall it be? Cold, bleak destiny? or an infinite and benignant power—a Father? What shall it be—what *can* it be, but “Trust in the Lord?”

This, then, it appears to me, is the significance of the text. Let me beseech you, though you forget all that I have said—do not forget *that*. And, in closing, I will just observe what breadth and nobleness, through the operation of this element of trust, religion imparts to all our existence. A man's conceptions and endeavors will be much influenced by his environments. Out in the broad field and the free air, where man stands face to face with God in nature, and discerns the tokens of His wisdom and His goodness in the springing grass and the ripening grain, it would seem easier to cherish devout thought, and to hold a clear, calm faith, than in narrow lanes and cramped apartments, shut in from the heavens and the cheerful light. But far better than nature does religion furnish the broad view, and give a large, free scope. It dissolves and transfigures the limitations of the body, by opening the windows and enlarging the prospect of

the soul. With its grand "Trust in the Lord" it roofs us with more than a cathedral, with more than a firmamental vastness. It expands the scope of our vision into the boundlessness of immortal hope. It attracts us to constant devotion. It inspires us with exhaustless energies. It fills us with an imperturbable and victorious peace.

XI.

The Epicurean's Maxim.

Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.


I. CORINTHIANS XV. 32.

THIS alternative, which the Apostle introduces into his argument for the resurrection of the dead, shows how completely a theory may be shattered by its own practical conclusions. The old Epicurean might boldly maintain the doctrine set forth in the text as an integral part of his system. But it would hardly be avowed by a member of the Corinthian church. The Pagan philosopher saw only the sensual relations of existence, and as such made the most of this earthly and transient state. He deemed it useless to repine at inexorable destiny, and so he crowned death with flowers. Because the opportunity for enjoyment was narrow, he would not therefore waste it in gloom, but filled it with banquets. The early Christian looked upon the world with far different eyes. He saw it penetrated by moral sanctions, and held in the hand of God. And yet, among those to whom Paul addressed this Epistle, there were some who, by denying the resurrection of the dead, broke down the partition between

themselves and their heathen neighbors. They opened a way for the same practical results. And, I repeat, the Apostle in thus stating these results shows the error of the doctrine out of which they spring. It is a fair argument. "For us," says the Epicurean, "there is only the present: there is only the material world without; there is only sensation within: let us, then, eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." "The conclusion is a correct one," says the Apostle; "the conclusion legitimately follows, if you deny the resurrection; but that very conclusion should cause you to doubt your premises. What is the use of all our sacrifice, of all our toil, of our surrender of tangible enjoyment for the abstractions of faith and the conceptions of duty? Let us indeed eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

I repeat, this is a fair argument. And in the present discourse I propose to take up this Epicurean maxim and consider it as an interpretation of life; to consider what follows if we accept it, and what follows if we reject it.

In the first place, let us consider it as a theory of life in general. Suppose this naked proposition to be addressed to us apart from any particular interest or passion of the moment: suppose it to be addressed to us as the best conclusion to be drawn from the facts of our existence—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." I ask any man who hears me—does this seem to you a satisfactory conclusion? Put away for the time being anything that seems like a mere traditional belief—a conventional opinion or impression. Put away everything but that which springs up as a



spontaneous faith in your own heart, and stand before this naked proposition with this universe stretching around you, with your own experience of life, and I ask—can you accept this proposition—“Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die ?” In other words—Let us live only in sensual indulgence ; let us feel the thrill of instant pleasure ; let us dismiss all carefulness of conscience ; let us give up all strenuous aims ; for to-morrow we shall be but ashes, and our personality will be cancelled forever ! I affirm that not simply the faith which we have been taught in childhood, and which prevails in churches and creeds,—but our souls, our instincts, all that is deepest in our nature, repels it, and everything without us repels it. It is thus repelled not merely as a moral consequence, but as a theory of life.

“To-morrow we die ! We sink out of consciousness and out of distinctive being for ever !” *That* is the theory, however it may be stated, or with whatever forms of speculation it may be involved. And I say, it is a theory that does not harmonize with things—does not answer to fact—does not interpret life. Let me take one or two illustrations upon this point. In the first place, this theory does not explain the position of man in relation to the universe. A writer of our day has remarked that animals have no perception of *space*, in any sense of boundless height or depth. This faculty is reserved for man. It is for him to measure the abysses of the firmament, and span the void that lies between the worlds. But this is only one instance of a much larger prerogative. It only illustrates in

one direction that peculiar attitude which man presents as the scholar and explorer of nature. You may demonstrate the affinities which he has with the brute—you may exhibit him bound up in the necessities of physical law,—still there is left the peculiarity of his intellect—the wonder of his achievement and endeavor. And now, if you propose the Epicurean maxim and say —“Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die”—I ask, what is the purpose of man’s existence if to-morrow he *does* really die ? Why from the great deep all around are such revelations made to him ? Revelations of truth higher than he has yet attained, revelations of beauty, of wonder, of splendid mystery ! Why has he not an eye like the brute’s eye, to glass the landscape, but not detect its suggestion ? If he is to die to-morrow, why is he not content to-day to graze in the hollows of a kindly Providence, and to recline upon its up-land slopes, without casting a glance upon the immensity that over-arches him, or cherishing a thought that “wanders through eternity ?” Why does all nature stir in him such reflection ? Why does his own heart heave with mysterious echoes to the moaning of the sea ? Why do the heavens look down upon him with such sweet and awful invitation ? For, more clearly than I can express it, every man feels that there *is* such a relation between himself and the world in which he is placed. It is a very presumptuous proposition to affirm that the world has been made for him alone, but certainly it does wear this aspect of ministration to the highest faculties of his being :—and these faculties reject a proposition so discordant with

their own operation and their relation to the world without.

Again : This Epicurean doctrine is incongruous with our own experience of human life. There may be certain conditions in life when death is welcome ; when our mortality is a burden, and we long to cast down its load of weariness and pain. But even this morbid condition of the human mind is not a desire for *annihilation*. It is a hankering after rest—a longing to emerge from this entanglement of troubles into a region of peace and light. But to sink through the abyss of the grave into perpetual unconsciousness, to be struck forever from the roll of existence—what heart is so benumbed with care or woe that it does not shrink from such an end ? Moreover, there are consolations which make death reconcilable, even to the most intense lover of this life. Such is the thought that our descent into the sepulchre is only the passage to a larger state—our momentary eclipse of sight only the transition of twilight consciousness into the vision of open day ; the thought that although we must lie down and die, and bodily quit this pleasant world, we shall have more intimate acquaintance, even with its most familiar things, and “ know as we are known ; ” the thought that although we may walk the fields of earth with human feet no more, nor see with eyes that are crumbling back to dust these marvellous processions of nature,—the setting suns, the mellow moons, the ripples on the summer wheat, the shadows on the mountain’s breast,—nor grasp the hand of friendship, nor look with answering light into the face of love, nor mingle with the

eager tides of enterprise, nor feel the movements of the world's great heart ; the thought that still we shall see all, feel all, know all, with finer cognizance, or else go forth to wider activities and purer joys :—conceptions like these, I say, may strip the gloom from death, even for those whose assurance has not been clear and strong. But who would not blench before that gulf of endless sleep to which the epicurean points when he says—"To-morrow we die?"

I repeat, then—this conclusion is incongruous with our own conscious desires and instincts. And even those experiences which may seem to hold closer affinity with such a conception—perplexity and sorrow—even these render their verdict against it. For what is the appeal that rises out of the depth of human affliction ? It speaks of an uncompleted purpose ; of a nature balked in its plans, chafing against its limitations, and capable of being satisfied with nothing less than immortal good. "A miserable world," do you say, O Epicurean ? "a wretched and abortive existence, and man a poor creature, tormented by pains, cheated by promises, fretting at inevitabilities, driven hither and thither by currents of chance and soon swept out of being : therefore, let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die ?" I reply, that such a theory does not correspond with the phenomena of human life ; especially human affliction. Sorrow does not predicate annihilation, but development. There is compensation in all things around us ; there must be in this experience. The real counter-stroke to the pulse of mortal anguish is not the full stop of death, but the vibration of im-

mortality. I look upon the trials of life and see what they produce,—how they train the human spirit, how they refine and elevate it, bringing sweetness out of bitterness and strength out of weakness : and there is only one explanation of these things. The theory that “ to-morrow we die ” is *no* explanation. Why, I want no other argument here than the sorrow of a mother for her child. Here, in ten thousand death-chambers, in heathen and in christian lands, is a spectacle that the heavens look down upon, and that blends with the familiar experiences of human life. Here is that quenchless love which held the little form close to its bosom as God holds His universe, and felt its awakening life throb against its sacred springs. And now that love flows on under tears, under the shadow of mourning drapery, under the grave-mound,—flows outward into the immensity of being, feels after its object and claims it still. Deep human sorrow, like that mother’s sorrow—do you argue annihilation in *that*? or, is there not a prophecy in it that with every beat of the heart shatters the theory that a troubled life has a dark end?

The Epicurean’s maxim, then, considered as a *theory*, does not explain the phenomena of human existence and human experience. And we have a right to charge it with this deficiency, in whatever form it is expressed or implied. But we arrive at the same result when we take up its *practical* conclusion. *Because* we die to-morrow, is the doctrine,—because we are only beings of sense and time, here for a little while and then vanishing away, “ let us eat and drink.” *If*

we perish like the brute, like the brute let us live. Now if we find that such a standard fails us as a rule of conduct, we may conclude that the theory of life on which it is founded is false.

“Let us eat and drink ; let us live only in sensual gratification !” Suppose this proposition seriously made to us as comprehending the entire purpose of human existence. Is there not something in every man’s brain, in every man’s heart, that rises up and refutes it ? Suppose it should be said to you—“Surrender everything to appetite. Banish all restraint ; it is only a whim of superstition. Give up all notion of spiritual realities ; they are but priests’ stories. Look at the world with unshaded eyes. Nature is voluptuous, and the real joy of life is in the spring of passion. The universe is all a great banquet-hall. The heavens are thronged with festal lights. The earth is hung with gorgeous upholstery. And what though here and there awful shapes flicker along the walls, and sad realities look in ? Drown possible sorrow in actual bliss, and snatch the bloom of the present moment. True, life passes swiftly, but let it sparkle as it runs. The young heart’s joys wither soon enough—at least we will sip their honey and their dew. Old age may come ; death awaits us ; but let each season bring its own circumstance. The evening cloud shall not vail the morning sunshine. Let the swift-running circle of immediate pleasure cut with its flashing sweep the shadows of memory and anticipation. Freshen your garlands in the wine-cup, and bind them dripping about your brows. “Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die !”

Undoubtedly such solicitation would find answer in many hearts. For although happiness, in and of itself alone, is *not* our "being's end and aim," our nature was made for joy, and it is an imperishable ingredient in the best condition of the soul. There is joy in every normal state of being ; there is joy in heaven. Everything that is contrary to this is evidently abnormal, transitional, or in the instrumentality of discipline working out to joy. Therefore the human heart naturally gravitates towards that which promises delight. But how long does it take to find out that no true joy exists in sensual absorption? Tell me, some of you who have tried life in this way! Tell me, O man of the world, how long before the banquet sickens you with surfeit, and the couch of luxury becomes a bed of restlessness and pain! How long before the harlot-mask of indulgence drops off, and you discover the painted deceit and ghastliness! Nay, I will not merely stand up here in this pulpit and preach against the Epicurean's doctrine. I will let those who have tried it preach for me. People pass by the dissipated man, the abandoned woman, with horror and alarm. But must we not regard them with deep pity, too, because they are so foolish, so mean, so poor in their self-abandonment? I must pity that young man who, with a little finery of dress and recklessness of manner, with his coarse passions all daguerreotyped upon his face, goes whooping through these streets, driving an animal much nobler in its conduct than himself, or swaggers into some haunt of shame, and calls it—"Enjoying life!" He thinks he is astonishing the world!

and he is astonishing the thinking part of it, who are astonished that he is not astonished at himself. For look at that compound of flash and impudence, and say if on all this earth there is anything more pitiable! He know anything of the true joy of life? As well say that the beauty and immensity of the universe were all enclosed in the field where the prodigal lay among the husks and the swine!

Eat, drink, limit life to the circle of the appetites! Can anybody do this and be satisfied? Can he interpret existence so narrowly as this, and grow to the conviction that it was all intended merely for this? His healthy instincts repel the Epicurean's maxim. The deepest joy of life does not abide in the senses. They decay, they wear out, and still the springs of true happiness are undisturbed. What enjoyment remains in the affections after the buoyancy of youth has ebbed away, and when all bodily vigor is failing—what bliss in their own exercise, and in the sympathy which they attract? In the experience of the aged there is often the richest joy, a joy with which the mere exhilaration of youth cannot be compared. It is a happiness deep and calm, into which flow all the springs of memory and of hope,—a happiness that makes wrinkles smile, and lends to the withered countenance the immortal beauty of the soul. I see happiness like this flowing serenely towards the grave, growing "brighter and brighter unto the perfect day," and I can understand how the highest ideal of life may be comprehended in joy. But I learn no such thing from the desecrated humanity the thoughtless revelry, the defiant laughter,

that says—"Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die."

There *is* happiness in the wealth which the intellect gathers to itself out of the boundless fields of truth—happiness in its endeavor and its victory. Every new fact is a joy to it. The march of knowledge through the cycles of a leaf, through the sweep of the firmament, is jubilant. All things that are revealed to it inspire it not only with instruction and with power, but with delight. Until life fails, and the man himself topples inward, this joy cannot fail ; and even that change is only the transit-sign that marks its passage into a more intimate communion. And, higher and profounder than all, there is happiness in that faith which "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is a joy of triumphant trust, and of far-seeing vision looking through the world, looking beyond death, realizing eternity, knowing the presence of God.

To the Epicurean's proposition, then—the proposition that we surrender everything to the enjoyment of the senses—I say, in the first place, that such a course of living does not enable us to encounter the problems of life ; does not qualify us to meet its trials and its end, and that no one can deliberately take up such a standard of existence and get along with it. And in the next place, if the Epicurean defends his maxim on the ground that "happiness is our being's end and aim," I reply that, while it is true that joy is an essential element in our being, there is no substantial happiness in sensual indulgence. The joy itself is evan-

escent ; the organs by which it is appreciated fail ; and the true delight of life comes from those very sources which this Epicurean philosophy overlooks or repudiates. Whatever *hypothesis* we may entertain concerning the purpose of life, before the actual facts of life itself, before the experience of every human soul, this doctrine—"Let us eat and drink," will not stand as a rule of conduct. But if it is not a tenable rule of conduct, then the premiss upon which it is based is false ; and therefore, in this way we come to the same conclusion as before—that the Epicurean's maxim is not the true theory of life.

But now let me ask—if this be so, what follows ? You, my hearers, may say—"Why, of course, this Epicurean doctrine is not true, and the preacher has expended needless labor in proving it false." But if you really think so, I am enabled to press still more closely the question—What follows ? I answer that the truth, the reality of *religion* follows. Its claims upon our faith, our hearts, our lives, follow. There is only this alternative—either the Christian System or the Epicurean. And the work of arguing against the latter is not so superfluous as you may suppose. There are a great many who, if they do not deliberately adopt it, act from it. There is a desire in their hearts that it may be true, and a half-formed conviction in their minds that it is true. They are inclined to nourish the conception that indulgence is the law of life, and that religion is merely a system of conventional machinery ; something useful for the very weak and the very good. They never think of it as a great

reality pressing its claims upon them, or of surrendering a single appetite to its restraints, or giving up a single purpose to its requirements.

But they constitute a much larger class who practically live out Epicurean conclusions. They are not the mere slaves of appetite ; their lives are not grossly sensual ; and certainly it would startle them to propose the doctrine set forth in the text as a deliberate rule of life. And yet how much of their action and their hope is as if death were the end of us, and this condition of existence all ! And upon such as these I press the alternative which the Apostle urges : " Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die." How does this strike you as a practical conclusion ? Surely, you may reply that it is a very legitimate conclusion, if the theory is true. As a *theory*, then, how does it meet these suggestions of your reason and your heart ? " To-morrow we die "—our personal peculiarity is forever cancelled from the realm of being. Is it indeed so ? Do we perish as the autumn leaves perish ? Do we die in the sense in which the brute dies ? You reject this also as a theory, then. The senses may respond to it, for they are fitted only to the things of sense. But there is something within you which can hold no terms of agreement with it. What is that something ? It is a higher nature, which, both in that which it rejects and that which it acknowledges, vindicates the authenticity of religion, and makes manifest the ground of the Christian claim. Be real, be in earnest about this matter, I beseech you. Do at least this thing. Decide between the Epicurean and the

Christian view. Accept the former, and then stifle these spontaneous convictions, cover up these deep instincts, get rid of them, or get along with them as you can. Or if you will take instead the truth and spirit of Jesus Christ ; if you spurn the Epicurean's maxim as incompetent and false ; then, by every principle of consistency and of honesty, I call upon you to cherish and exhibit a corresponding life.

XII.

Ideals of Life.

What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.

ECCLESIASTES 1. 3, 4.

THE most enduring passages in literature are those which speak directly *to* or *from* the common humanity. They either reveal the truth which men long to know, or they express the problems which men most deeply feel. The verses before us belong to the latter class. The question which they contain is a very ancient and a very common one. It has moved in the hearts, it has fallen from the lips, of men long before the days of Solomon, and long since. It is a question as to the purpose of human effort—as to the purpose of human existence itself. “What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?”

Two conceptions are blended in human consciousness—the conception of the *transient*; the conception of the *enduring*. All around him man finds symbols of permanence and symbols of change; something that passes away, something that “abideth forever.” His eye rests on the drifting clouds, on the falling

leaves, on the rapid cycles of seed-time and harvest. But, on the other hand, the great frame of the world endures, the mountains lift their heads through all time, and the ever-changing sea is ever the same. Science in its sharp perception may make a reverse estimate of these things. It may discover that that which apparently abides is perpetually flowing away, while all these evanescent phenomena may proclaim an eternal fact. Nevertheless, things as they appear to our ordinary eyesight are symbolical of things as they are. They represent the two-fold condition of existence—the permanent, the transient. And to each of these conditions man himself is allied. No flying cloud, no autumn leaf, is more sure of dissolution. His generations come and go, like the roll of successive waves. And yet there is a consciousness of something in himself that abides forever. A subtile suggestion of his own imperishability insinuates itself even in the challenge of scepticism. It finds utterance in the very question of the text. What, then, is man himself, who is involved with both these extremes? What is the purpose of his life? “One generation passeth away and another generation cometh : but the earth abideth forever.” In this flowing tide of change he lives and acts. But “what profit hath” he “of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?”

There are at least three methods of solving, or attempting to solve, this problem. There are three ideals of human life.

I. The Sentimental, in which predominates the conception of human existence as *transitory*.

II. The Worldly, in which this earthly condition is practically treated as *final*.

III. The Moral, from which point of view the life of man is regarded as *real*.

Let us now direct our attention to each of these ideals in its turn, and endeavor to ascertain which best corresponds with all the facts.

I. What I call the *sentimental* ideal of life, is that which brings into the utmost prominence the transitory phase of human existence. It is founded upon the fact that "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh." Its symbols are the vanishing clouds, the fading leaves, and all the frail insignia of the autumn season. Such as these, it proclaims, are all human glory and achievement. They are but clouds and shadows, and as the emptiness of a dream. Like the mists that drive across the heavens and dissolve, so is the entire procession of human history. So men are as leaves that flourish for a few brief days, and then fade and drop in shrouds of silence in the solemn twilight of the year.

And there may be those who think that this is peculiarly a *religious* view, and that it indicates a spiritual frame of mind to talk of the transitoriness of all human things—of the short possession and little worth of all we gain and all we accomplish. But it is *not*, in itself, a religious view of life, or of man's position in the present world. I undertake to say that is not mainly the conclusion arrived at by the writer of the

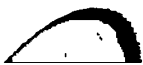
book of Ecclesiastes. There was a sense in which he saw that human performance was "vanity." But he recognized both terms of our existence, and found that all was not vanity. He discovered that it was not vanity to fear God, and keep his commandments; and that however futile is much of our effort and much of our desire, whenever there is really anything for us to do, we should do it with our *might*.

No, away with this merely sentimental conception of life as a dream; this one-sided view of its transitoriness, about which men may preach or sneer. No truly spiritual mind—no man who surveys life upon all sides, and seeks to make the best of it, ever rested in this as his ideal. Paul felt that "the time is short," but he had too much to do with life's realities to think it all a dream. And John, who looked through these material veils, and saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, found in this present state too much to love and pray for, to treat it as a mere shadow. And Luther, whose every word was a battle-stroke for the truth; and Howard, who in the light of his own heart kindled by the flame of Christian benevolence, saw the meaning of the saddest and the worst conditions—never thought of brooding over the transitoriness of human affairs as the largest conception of things. Genuine religion does not come out of such a view; nor any broad and worthy action—only morbid inefficiency and ascetic isolation. The creed of the true saint is to make the best of life, and make the most of it. But how are you going to make the best of a dream, or the most of a shadow? In such a

case would it not be better to lie still and sleep, or to keep ourselves restrained that we may not be cheated by an illusion? Even if life were a dream, we might say—surely it is not a dream to be despised, filled as it is with elements of wonder and images of beauty. A grand dream-scene truly! through which the generations of men come and go; a great dream-scene, set round with the magnificence of the earth that abideth forever, and covered by the illimitable sky! Even if it were all a dream—a pageant transient as the vapor, fading as the leaf—still what is there in this dream that we should speak of it lightly, and denounce it as only vanity? But out of such a disparaging conception comes no spring of moral action, no inspiration of noble effort, no true religion.

No, rather do irreligion and scepticism come out of such a conception of human life. Ascetic repudiation is closely allied to sensual indulgence. At the foot of the pillar on which Simeon Stylites seeks to escape from the world, sits the Epicurean with his maxim—“Let us eat and drink; *for* to-morrow we die.” If life is thus a mere glittering vision, why be at all in earnest? Why not make what we can out of it in the consciousness of present enjoyment, and in scorn of all anxiety? As in a sinking ship, men grow reckless and drown the conviction of near peril in a delirium of the senses, so in the feeling that life itself is but a painted bubble on the tide of time. Oh! there is no mockery like the mockery of that spirit that looks around in the world and believes that all is emptiness. Gross sensualism, that plunges a man headlong in the

mire and leaves him wallowing there with brutish eyes, is not to be compared in terribleness with that scoffing unbelief which denies all depth and substance in life, and looks upon everything as a hollow mask ; which laughs alike at the good and the evil, at the delirium of passion and the repose of faith, at the scramble of ambition and the efforts of self-sacrificing love ; which doubts all virtue, and jeers at all enthusiasm, and sets in the mean light of ridicule all that is tender and all that is venerable. There is a noble kind of satire, a proper application of the doctrine—"All is vanity," which flashes the light of spiritual truth upon all superficial living and base aims. This sort, however, while it scathes the false, glorifies the true ; and driving men from the mere shell of life into its substance, really exalts and inspires them. But the sceptical version of "All is vanity," makes the shell and the substance all one thing ; makes all things shell and falsehood, and denies and denounces the whole. There are men so metallic and hollow themselves, that all they touch rings as if it were metallic and hollow also. In passing through their hands, it becomes for the time being electrotyped with their own baseness. There are men who can sit in a world of mysterious lights and shadows, of man's heroism and woman's love, of toil and prayers, of household sanctities and graves ; a world steered by unseen power through seas of starry space ; and yet call it all "vanity,"—all an empty and vanishing shadow ! Surely we know with what tone and spirit *they* would ask the question—"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun ?"



II. In the next place, there is what may be called the *worldly* view of life. Those who adopt this ideal make the present life, the present conditions of their life, virtually *final*. The vital article in their creed is, that "the earth abideth forever." So they take the other extreme from that which I have just been describing. Instead of living as if human life and its conditions here were all a dream, they act as if all were permanent ; as if nothing was needed or existed beyond. The one form of practical unbelief is involved with the conception that everything in this life is transient and worthless ; the other is sustained by the delusion that not only the world but we who are in it are enduring. I speak now not of theoretical views, but of practical results. And I reiterate my proposition, that there are those to whom this world and what is in it constitute the only good ; and they live as if this were a *permanent* good. Else, I ask, why are their standards of action, and their ideals of life, all *of* the world ? They live as though this were their perpetual dwelling-place, and they should never know any change. The earth abideth forever, and they act as though they, like it, were destined to endure, unaffected by the touch of time, and retaining their places as ages glide away. Their hold upon existence is intense. They seize upon it with every faculty of their being and drink in all its delight. Shall they not always look upon these familiar forms, and be one with the great life of nature that streams through all things ? Shall they not continue to behold these daily and nightly heavens, these alternating seasons, the myriad phases

of this wonderful and beautiful world? So do they feel, steeped in the delusion of the present, conscious of that which is permanent in their own natures, and identifying that permanence with things of time and sense. So millions have felt before them, clinging intensely to the visible world. Ah! the earth abideth forever; but one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh. The earth abideth forever, to tell the story of a humanity that perpetually changes, and whose tides of life have flowed over it without return. It bears upon its bosom the foot-prints of eager endeavor, and the sleeping-places of forgotten names. Eyes have long since ceased to weep or laugh to which its face was once familiar; and hearts that tasted of its delight as from a full wine-cup, have now become part of its dust. It has scarcely an acre that does not remind us of actions that have long preceded our own, and its clustering tomb-stones loom up like reefs of the eternal shore, to show us where so many human barks have struck and gone down. The earth abideth forever; but it abides as the seed-field and the garner of a humanity that perpetually comes and goes.

And yet, in this predominant idea of worldly permanence, or at least of worldly good, men set up their standards of action, and fix their aims. Here are the premises from which they start, and the conclusions to which they come. What they get or what they lose of earthly value is their measure of failure or success. In one word, with them this world is final. Or, to give a more descriptive title to the aspects of things as they are practically affected by them, we may say,

that as to the class of which I have spoken before life is a *dream*, so to these life is a *game*. The great object is to pluck whatever may be gained from the world. To how many is this the highest aim; the purpose to which their talents are devoted, the end toward which their efforts move! By this light you can read many a splendid biography; with this interpretation you may turn away from many "a chequered spectacle of glory and of shame." The great man to whom the essayist, however justly or unjustly, has applied this sentence, and who sits among the most regal of human intellects, has at least given impulse to this ideal of life in the scientific influence which he has shed abroad, and which appears in the most magnificent achievements of our day. For the achievement of science is the achievement of a dominion *in* and *of* this world. Of course no man can deny the grandeur and the benefit of this achievement, but neither can we deny the danger involved in its *tendencies*—the danger of absorption in material success, and in the ends for which science furnishes the vehicles. And lesser men than Lord Bacon, taking this worldly ideal of life, have made and do make this life to be merely a *game*. Only a game for the statesman, or politician, who changes his professions as a harlequin changes his dress, and plays with principles as with dice. Only a game for the man who seeks place or power through any rat-hole of expediency, or over any impediment of everlasting right. Only a game to him who scrambles for a fortune; who cares neither for God nor for Cæsar, but only for the coin that bears the superscription;

who casts off scruples and picks up expedients, and heeds not whose plank he snatches, whose life-preserver he cuts away, so that he keeps self above the water. Only a game to the base profligate, whose counters are lies, and whose winnings are the spoils of innocence, mingled with despair, and curses, and broken hearts.

It is very plain that all such results as these are closely connected with the worldly ideal of life. In some way they are based upon the conception that the earth abideth forever, and that there is no standard but the world's good and the world's gain. So he who strikes a vein of worldly luck is called "a made man;" and he who has lost coin or credit is "broken." His fortune is broken, but let me ask—is *he* really broken? Some portion of the dust of this earth that abideth forever has been scattered from his hands, but is *he* nothing more than that dust?

O you whom worldly fortune presses hard, and to whom the face of the earth looks gloomy, and life itself seems like a horn of plenty turned inside out! what is the standard by which you rate your actual failure, your hoped-for success? Is there nothing for man but the earth that abideth forever, and merely the good that springs out of the earth? Is there nothing born of this wondrous life itself, that comes and goes with every generation—in its toil, its struggle, its manifold experiences, is there nothing born of it or gathered into it that is better than silver or gold? Are there no joys, no hopes, no tender and immortal affections, no substance of manhood itself, that misfortune cannot break or disappointment kill? Is there

no inward treasure-house of incorruptible wealth, that one failing of worldly success should cry out, "*All is vanity?*"

Surely, then, we ought not to be of those to whom practically this earth is everything; who enter upon life to "play out the game," and with flushed and covetous eagerness, setting up the standard of worldly gain or loss, inquire—"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?"

III. We have thus far considered the *sentimental* ideal of human life, culminating in the conception of its transitoriness, and which virtually makes it but a *dream*; and we have seen also what is the *worldly* ideal in which these present conditions are practically treated as *final*, and which resolves life into a *game*. Let us now, finally, direct our attention to the *moral* ideal of life. And I proceed to observe, that, from this point of view, life is regarded neither as transitory, nor in its present conditions as final, but as *real*. It is not a dream, it is not a game, but it is a *problem*. And it is a problem which this moral ideal alone can solve. And from this ground of thought and action the two opposite phases of human existence are confessed and reconciled. Life is transitory; life is enduring. Transitory in its present form; enduring in its essence. In its mortal cycle it is symbolized by the cloud and the leaf. It is represented by the generations that come and that pass away. In its immortal substance it is typified by the earth that abideth forever. The exclusive consciousness of either of these facts induces evil. The consciousness of the transient

condition induces ascetic repulsion or Epicurean mockery. The consciousness of enduring being becomes confused with the notion of *earthly* endurance. The moral ideal blends these separate conceptions, and inspires man with the truth that he is working in changing conditions for permanent ends. *He* endures, while his form of being alters. Not what he gains of outward good, but of inward blessedness, is the end of his existence, is the solution of life's problem; is the noblest answer to the question—"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?"

The great fact for us to know and to feel is, that life is *real*. As real as our own consciousness of being is real. As real as is our experience of good or evil, of joy or sorrow. Life, whether in this world or any other, is the sum of our attainment, our experience, our character. The conditions are secondary. In what other world shall we *be* more surely than we are here? Rapidly as our generations come and go, wherever each of us actually *is*, there is the place of required effort, and there is the centre of a moral result. And the absolute profit that we may gain here under the sun, is that good which will abide with us—that good which becomes part of ourselves.

Our life is indeed transitory, is unsubstantial, if you confine your thoughts to its earthly relations and its mortal form. But not so when you define it as consciousness and as experience. However swiftly these generations pass along, to each personal atom in that flowing stream of being, life is real. It is a conscious power precipitated into existence by the hand of God,

and quivering with joy or with pain. Life a mere film, a shadow? only as a cloud that vanishes, a leaf that falls? Will you preach that doctrine to the children of poverty, to the daughters of woe? Unroof some of the dwellings in this great city that are huddled together under the vail of darkness! Look into the faces that cluster there! Read the expressions of a sorrowful consciousness that sends up its surges to lip and eye! Read the look of pain, and hunger, and despair! See the blank hopelessness of discontented labor—the misery of women who know not where to turn, in the dreadful alternative of death or ruin! See the wild joy with which the mother, snatching “the boneless gums” of her child from her famine-withered breast, detects the white seal of death on that child’s face, with one cold touch dismissing it from suffering! Tell those who feel life in misery creeping to their marrow, in want appealing through every faculty of their nature, in misfortune striking them with heavy hands; who feel nature crushing them with its iron wheels; or who know life most intensely in the accusations of conscience, and by the canker of guilt, by their own hearts, heavy with infamy, and at every beat throbbing against the burning bars of shame;—tell such as these that life is transitory and unsubstantial, and they may thank you for the assurance that it is short, but they will tell you that they *know* it is real.

Life is not a mere dream, that we may despise it, or let it fruitlessly glide away. It may furnish us with *illusions*. We may cherish conceptions in it that are

never realized. The boy's ideal world may not be the actual world, and yet by that ideal he is urged to go forward into the world. The philanthropist's hope may not appear in the coming future, yet the inspiration of that hope may make him a hero, and perhaps a martyr. There may be visions along our way, visions on the path of duty, visions in the scope of faith; and by them we may often be deluded—by them, too, we may often be helped and improved. But visions do not constitute the sum and substance of life, and such as they are they indicate the greatness, not the littleness of life. They prove that life itself is not a dream, but that life is real. For who are *we* that dream, and for what end are these dreams given?


Life is not a game. It is not a field merely for selfish uses, limited by worldly ends, as though it were only of this earth that abideth forever. It is an arena for noble effort, it is a school for our immortal faculties; it is a discipline conducting to our highest good. It is an opportunity for us not merely to get, but to attain—not simply to *have*, but to *be*. Its standard of failure or success is not outward fortune, but inward possession.

Life is a problem. Not merely a premiss from which we start, but a goal towards which we proceed. Not a selfish standard of having and getting, but a revelation requiring of us a posture of reception. What is yet to be known, what is yet to be done, is the consideration involved with this moral ideal. It inspires us to seek an end in life beyond the mere forms of life; to detect a significance in every fact of our being;

while with the transient woof and the enduring warp of our existence we weave a permanent spiritual result. That one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, is a reminder for our diligence. That there is something within us that endures, answering to the conception of the earth abiding forever, is a ground for our patience and our trust.

Permit me, then, to put this plain, direct question—What do *you* think of life? Surely, you have *some* thought concerning it. Surely, you are not living without some conception of *why* you live, and what the end is to be. Indeed, we cannot truly live until some conception of life's purpose, some ideal of life itself, rises in our minds and takes possession of our hearts. We are all laboring to some end; even those who are most careless and frivolous are laboring—laboring, it may be, more heavily than the rest. And now here rises the problem—"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" Here, too, appear the *conditions* of the problem. On the one hand, a transient residence in this mortal state; a life quick vanishing like the mists of the morning, like the leaves that are falling in yellow showers through the sunshine and shadow of these autumn days. On the other hand, here is the earth that abideth forever.

In this state of things what shall we assume? That our entire being is transient?—is like the cloud that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away? Or, that all our being is limited to this earth, and therefore we practically fall into the delusion that thus we are to abide forever?




It is evident that adopting either of these grounds of thought exclusively, we shall give a different interpretation to the question, "What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" from that which is afforded by a perception of the elements of truth contained in both these extremes. What profit, indeed, if man is only an ephemeral creature, fluttering into nothingness, or merely an animal, all whose relations and whose scope of being are fixed in this present state!

But such a solution of the life-problem does not answer to our consciousness, which, with the knowledge of that which is transient in our earthly conditions, blends the assurance of something that is permanent. No, we are compelled, by our own experience, by the revelations of our own nature, to fall back upon the moral ideal of life—the conception that through transient conditions we work for permanent ends, and that *that* only is "profit" which, adding to the substance of our immortal nature, becomes in us spiritual power and blessedness, and similitude to God.

Brethren, need I assure you that the theme of this discourse is of the deepest importance? that it is involved with your closest interests? The facts in the case are clear and palpable. We *live*. We *act*. Life, to each of us, is *something*. We know how many of its forms and relations are transient—but also we are made aware of something within ourselves, and of ourselves that abides forever. If the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes does not corroborate this intimation of our higher nature, Christ demonstrates it for us. He

demonstrates it not only by his own resurrection, but by the Spirit of Eternal Life which he imparts to us. No man can partake of that spirit—no man can look upon life in any degree as Jesus looked upon it, and not feel sure that it is real. With no sentimental depreciation, with no ascetic contempt, did He regard the world which He marked with the foot-prints of His labor, the tears and blood of His self-sacrificing love. For no mere earthly ends, no limitation of the senses, did He reveal the sanctions of our conduct and the worth of our souls. And the noblest use of life starts from His point of view. What a grandeur it imparts to existence! How base it makes our selfish scrambling and our frivolous aims! What significance it lends to the trial and difficulty of our mortal lot!

How, then, does our actual life correspond with this moral ideal—with Christ's ideal! Do we live as those whose most treasured results are frail and ebbing away—or as those whose real life is immortal? Examine your lives, consider your work—and say, What is the *practical* answer which you give to this great problem—"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?"



XIII.

The Principle of the Divine Kingdom.

And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.

MARK xii. 32-34.

THE grandest utterance of modern science is the announcement, that the study of nature is the perusal of the Creator's thoughts. That our systems and classifications are not convenient contrivances of our own ingenuity, but the way-marks of Infinite intelligence, by which the human mind instinctively apprehends and traces out the plan of the Divine. Natural philosophy, therefore, appears not as a proud structure of man's invention, but as a method of reverent study and faithful interpretation. And thus does science, in its boldest and most independent investigations, attain to the long-felt realities of faith, and bear voluntary witness to the great truths of religion.

And it will be observed that this testimony is *two-fold*—having reference to God, and having reference

to man. These discoveries in the natural world about us, make known at once the Divine source of being, and the dignity of that humanity by which this source of being is recognized and approached. The conclusion seems irresistible. There is no evidence that mere forms of matter, or currents of physical force, do themselves think. But, in the *relations* of matter—in the adjustments by which bone is linked to bone, and sinew to sinew, and the eye fitted to the light, and the light suited to the eye, and part bears reference to part, and all parts are knit together in one organic whole—in all these there is evidence that there has been *thought* somewhere; there is an *intelligent* connection compelling us to look for an intelligent Creator and Disposer of these relations. The manifestations of thought arranging these things, that do not themselves think, is proof of a “thinking God.”

On the other hand, the being himself who apprehends this thought—to whom, by virtue of certain inherent faculties, the evidence of thought appears in the things of the natural world around him—the scholar and interpreter of these preëstablished relations—must be in alliance with that Infinite Intelligence. He apprehends the manifestations of thought in things about him by a kindred quality in his own nature. Therefore the testimony of science is to the truth of God, and of man made in the image of God. Its effect is to deliver us from the slough of materialism; from all atheistic conceptions of the origin of things; from all disheartening and degrading views of human nature; all views that involve the annihilation of the human

soul, or that identify man with the brute. On the solid substructure of science, apprehending this element of thought in the universe, rises the fabric of natural religion glorious and impregnable. But in the relations of things in the world around him, man finds something more than pure intelligence. He discovers a pervading *benificence*. Not only is one part linked to another in a wondrous chain of order, but these are so fitted as to secure the general *well-being* of each and of all. Whatever facts may intrude here or there, they are not sufficient to disturb the general impression, or to eclipse the prevailing evidences of Supreme goodwill. Our conviction of Divine goodness in things is as spontaneous and as instinctive as our conviction of Divine intelligence in things. We cannot separate the perception of the one from that of the other. Wherever we gaze, wherever we explore, we behold the features of creative skill steeped in the smile of creative love. An adjusting intelligence is not more evident in the structure of the little wood-bird, than it is evident that his humble nest and simple wants are comprehended in a kind and universal care. And the truth brought thus before our eyes in these small and familiar ways, is the central fact that runs through all things. Beyond that midnight belt of splendor; even through those tracts of dim magnificence where man longs yet trembles to proceed, the conviction never forsakes us that we are within the enclosure not only of a plan, but of a beneficent plan, and that intellectual order is at the same time the expression of divine goodness.

And if we enlarge the field of observation, we only increase the testimony. Even within the sphere of human relations, where we encounter the largest amount of conflicting facts, the two-fold witness is plainly manifest, and wherever we find intelligent pre-arrangement, we find benevolent purpose. What a proof of the Divine tenderness is there in the human heart itself, which is the organ and receptacle of so many sympathies. When we consider how exquisite are those conditions by which it is even made *capable* of so much suffering—the capabilities of a child's heart, of a mother's heart—what must be the nature of Him who fashioned its depths and strung its chords?

Not only *parallel*, then, with the manifestations of thought in the world around us, but inextricably *blended* with these, we find the expression of an all-pervading goodness. The specific difference, however, between these two elements, appears in the fact that the intellectual order indicates only a *method*, or *process*, but the prevailing beneficence declares a final *cause*, or *purpose*. The one bears the character of an agent, the other has the greatness and importance of an end. The highest truth which the universe makes known to us is the truth that not only is the Creator intelligent, but that He is good. That goodness, therefore, is the highest conceivable excellence.

But I observe, still further, that if man apprehends the Divine intelligence in the things around him by a kindred intelligence in his own nature, so does he apprehend the Divine beneficence by a kindred quality. There must be some spark of sympathy in

the human soul that responds to the excellence of God Himself. Man recognizing the love of God is capable of assimilating and exercising that love. And as this love is the highest fact of being, it follows that man attains the true end of his existence in proportion as this love becomes the law and spirit of his life. And while, as we have seen, the structure of natural religion rests upon the Divine intelligence in nature, apprehended by a kindred intelligence in man, upon this still more fundamental basis of the Divine love, and the capability of man for apprehending and communing with that love, rests the fabric of Christianity. For Christianity is a more comprehensive and distinct expression of this great fact, that gleams out from every feature of nature and of human experience. In Jesus Christ the Divine goodness is concentrated and personified ; and His lips announced that which His life made known—that the supreme law of being is the law of love, and therefore that the fulfilment of that law is the loftiest attainment set before the heart and soul of man. And thus, resting upon this great truth, Christianity stands upon a foundation as firm and as demonstrable as the propositions of science—as the facts of nature itself.

And thus we see how it is true, as Jesus said, and as the Scribe in the words of the text confessed, that the first of all the commandments is love. Thus, too, we see how the fulfilment of this commandment is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices ; and how he who even clearly apprehends this truth is “not far from the kingdom of God.”

And having considered the ground of the truth set forth in this passage, let us proceed to notice a few points which grow out of it. Let us meditate upon this law of love as the *principle of the Divine Kingdom* and more than "burnt offerings and sacrifices," by regarding it,

- I. As the consummation of being.
- II. As the motive of action.
- III. When it becomes the experimental element of the heart and the life.

I. "To love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." This is the principle of the Divine kingdom ; for Christ saw that the scribe who confessed this "answered discreetly," and declared that he was "not far from the kingdom of God." And we discern the ground of this supremacy, I observe in the first place, in the fact that the attainment and exercise of this Divine element of love is the consummate result of man's being. This has been shown in the preceding remarks. Man attains the perfection of his nature in proportion as he assimilates to the Divine nature ; in proportion, therefore, as he becomes possessed and regenerated by love, which is the essence of the Divine nature—for "God is love." Therefore the possession and exercise of this quality as the law of the heart and the understanding—the cherishing of it with all the soul, and

all the strength—is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices—is more than any external act or performance which these may represent. For, in the first place, these burnt offerings and sacrifices, even at the best, are but *steps* towards the highest life.

Let us not deny the efficacy of forms and ceremonies, or of certain moral acts which may be nothing more than forms and ceremonies—let us not deny the efficacy of these as modes of help and discipline in the progress of the Divine life. We should measure upward as well as downward ; estimating not only from the point of ideal attainment, but from the point of actual effort. The burnt offerings and sacrifices may not indicate the highest result in spiritual life and knowledge, but they may indicate a great advance from ignorance and superstition, and from the bondage of sensuality and sin. Thus the ceremonials of the Old Testament may seem gross and imperfect as compared with the freedom and spirituality of the New ; but how does the system to which they belonged, and which they maintained, compare with other modes of religious faith and worship among the nations by which the ancient Jews were surrounded ? There stands this undeniable fact, that by this system of ritual-education—by these “ burnt offerings and sacrifices ”—an entire people were brought into relations with the Infinite One, far transcending the vague notions and superstitious practices of their contemporaries. Through these symbols and shadows they caught glimpses of the sublime truth which shines out in the Revelation of the Gospel, and in the face of Jesus Christ. They

arrived at the conception of One Supreme and Holy God. So far, therefore, the burnt offerings and sacrifices were steps towards the truth.

And we should allow this interpretation in considering *any* expression of religious reverence or faith. In the rudest forms which for this purpose men use, we should estimate not only from *our* point of view, but from *theirs*. The symbol may appear to us very gross ; but what does it signify to him who employs it? For us that expression of faith and worship would be a great step backward ; but for him it may be a great step *forward*, out of absolute recklessness and practical atheism. It may point far off, but still it *does* point towards that God whose true worship is in love, and whose law of love is the principle of the Divine kingdom. I can have no sympathy with any irreverent handling even of men's religious errors, if they *are* religious errors, and express for them something supreme and holy. I respect the spiritual attitude of the poor girl who counts her beads, summing up in that act her best ideas of God and duty ; stringing on that single thread all the consecrated hours of her life, running away back among the memories of childhood, and the shadows of cathedral walls in father-land. I respect even the thrill of awe that stirs the darkened soul of the African bowing before his fetish, and recognize in it a mystic touch from out the Infinite leading him on, though it be a very little way, from this wilderness of material, animal life—a very little way on in the path whereby good men and true men have attained to enlightened vision and positive

communion with the One Living God. I have some respect for these expressions of a sense of something higher and better, deeply mixed as they are with error. But I have no respect for the man who can only laugh at them, even though he be philosopher, Christian and Protestant. And I am inclined to ask whether, with all his consciousness of spiritual views and intellectual superiority, there is so much of a Divine *tendency*—so much that runs in the way towards Divine communion—as in these over-shadowed souls whom God accepts for what they *mean*, rather than for what they *do*?

It is something for men in this world to hold even by the fringes of Divine reality. And, although they must touch some palpable and formal thing, it is good if, when they *do* touch that, some key-note to faith and reverence responds in their souls.

It is better—is it not?—even for the reckless man pitched upon the waves of worldly fortune—gross and often profane, it may be—in fact assimilated to the conditions among which he lives; it is better—is it not?—that he holds even by some shred of a religious sanction, some fragment of a liturgy, some scrap of devotion, some little tarnished clue of reverential practice which accompanies him through the labyrinth of his worldly life from the baptismal font and the village church—so that even in strange scenes he murmurs perhaps the Lord's Prayer, or on the rocking sea, or by the camp-fire of the battle-field, says, "Now I lay me down to sleep"—surely even these hasty and inconsistent steps forward are better than utter nega-

tion and moral stupor. For they *are* steps forward ; or, rather they are steps upward from the dead ground of materialism and no-faith ; even though they are few and broken, like steps in a ruin, ending in nothing, yet pointing up—making all the more significant that ruin itself, and the awful space towards which they point.

Once more I say, then, let us not deny the efficacy of the burnt offerings and sacrifices, if they actually are expressions of sincere reverence and faith. Let us confess that they may mean something even for the most benighted ; nay, how they may mean a great deal even for men of lofty spiritual sentiment, though we ourselves may sympathize more with those who worship in the sublimity of a filial trust, and aspire to the communion of the naked soul.

But with this distinct recognition of the value that may exist in ceremonials, or in those formal acts of morality which are also ceremonials ; we are prepared all the more clearly to see that, as mere ceremonies, mere acts of constraint and routine, there is no genuine religious life in them, and they are far from constituting the great end of religious attainment. It is indeed most lamentable when a man's ideal of spiritual life is completed in ceremony, and he stops satisfied with merely formal acts of religion. What a meagre conception is this of the privileges of the soul in the exercise of the spirit of love, and in communion with God ! How sad to see those faculties which might live and grow in all the freedom and joy and largeness of the religious life ; inspired, so to speak, by the very element and motive of the Divine nature ; mummified

in traditional bondage, and dwarfed and wilted in a little round of ceremonies. The burnt-offerings and sacrifices are only *steps* towards the end, or else they are only *symbols* of an inward and spiritual service. All those ceremonials of the Old Testament grew dim and useless before the glory of that self-sacrificing love that hung upon the cross. And when man assimilates that love to himself, the outward performance is secondary to the inward condition—it is only the expression of that condition. That interior love—that spiritual oneness with the Divine love—will manifest itself in outward acts as surely as any ordinary affection will manifest itself. It cannot help manifesting itself. But the end is attained in that inward spirit. The consummate result of our nature is not in *doing*, but in *being*—being like God, who “is love.” And, therefore, to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, is more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

II. I observe, in the next place, that the supremacy of love, as the principle of the Divine kingdom, is apparent in its working as a *motive* of action. It is thus the vital force of all persistent and noble doing. Indeed it is the very life of the best things, devoid of which they are only dead bodies. What is religion without love, but a draped and chilling form, with a sanctimonious look and with phylacteries about its brow? What is the intellectual act of faith—the mere apprehension of God and of spiritual realities by the

faculties of the mind—what is this more than a splendid achievement of human thought, in which man the thinker sits with all his implements of knowledge in his hands, and with the radiant coronet of science on his head, as unmoved by the real significance of these Divine glories as one of those kings that sit in their robes of state, dead as the dead marble around them? What is prayer without love, but the mockery of lofty compliment, or the awe and agony of servile fear?

Love is the very life of the best things, and without it, I repeat, they are mere bodies, dead and empty. Is not that a wonderful passage, where the apostle makes even those acts which we sometimes confound with this great spiritual principle—makes acts of *charity* themselves to appear as hollow and worthless without the animating spirit of love? The act of *alms-giving*, in which we stand far off from our suffering brother, and touch him only with a metallic rim of silver or of gold, with measured steps pacing the ramparts of poverty, and only *watching* God's poor! There is no true charity that has not in it the pulse of sympathy, and that does not thrill with the implicated life-blood of our common humanity. We must rejoice with those that rejoice, we must mourn with those that mourn. We must, in some sort, enter into the feeling of their agony, and even of their very shame. The under-current of our humanity must, at some point, blend with the under-currents of this great surging sea of population, crested with bleached faces of famine, and heaving to the surface its waifs of ghastliness and despair. Mothers in comfort! feel like mothers in heart-

breaking anguish gazing upon their starved and dying babes. Men in affluence! enter with deep respect and thoughtfulness into that misery which is not clamorous, which shows no abject look, but which being silent is all the more keen and fatal, covered by the respectable habit of happier years, and concealed by a shield of instinctive pride which is that sort of noble heraldry that one surrenders last on the disastrous battle-field of life. Hosts of Christian help! move with swift eagerness, as if for your own lives, to the succor of those shattered ranks that are borne down by the charge of calamity and the spear-points of winter cold. Hearts of virtue! by the very blessedness of your own consciousness, rate the fearful conflict, pity the dreadful fall of those who walk in guilty desolation challenged by the holy stars. Only *theirs* are deeds of living charity who love their neighbors as themselves, and in that potent sympathy there is a blessing far beyond the value of any formal gift.

No doubt, apart from the spirit of love as a principle of action, there may be a certain virtue of *submission*, or *obedience*: as, for instance, the child may perform a duty simply because it is a parental *command*, unconscious of any intrinsic excellence in the deed, and unmoved by any love for the essence of the thing. There are rules of action which we *must* obey, there are moral obligations which we *must* discharge, whether we do it from the motive of love or not. There are legal requirements and positive precepts that must have our allegiance, though they may not gain our affections or even enlist our will. There are rules and laws in the-

family, in the school, in the State, and the organic integrity of these institutions may be preserved by bare obedience. But there is no true blessedness in the family, there is no glorious attainment in the school, there is no absolute safety in the State, where love is not the spring of all obedience. Men do well, men do nobly, only that which they do lovingly. It matters not that they *ought* to love it. I repeat, the condition of noble performance is in the fact that they *do* love it. Men may formally repent of sin ; but they are not delivered from sin so long as they love it—they are delivered from it only when they love goodness, when they love the highest goodness set forth in the life and personality of Jesus Christ more than all the forms, more than the very essence of evil. Oh! this negative renunciation, this vital restriction, is not enough—is mere barrenness and emptiness. No true life for the soul grows in the soil of negation. Our hearts must be kindled and vivified with a *positive* element—we must be attracted, drawn, nailed as it were to the very cross of Christ, in sympathy with the spirit there displayed, in assimilation of it to our own inward and truest life. Love the Lord thy God with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and thy neighbor as thyself—this is deliverance from all sin ; it is deliverance from selfishness which is the *root* of sin.

And still further observe, that there is an inexhaustible *joy* in love, which springs up even in the performance of the most severe duties, and of the most painful work. How often does selfishness end in sor-

row, and the utmost success become mockery ! I was much struck with a fact which came under my notice some time since, and I presume it fell under the notice of many of you. It was an account of a man of almost incalculable riches, who, in order to humor his mania, I believe, had been placed in the alms-house, and who died there, tormented and overwhelmed by the notion that he should come to absolute want ; and instances, to a greater or less degree, like this, I presume, are not rare. Now, I ask you, is it conceivable that a loving spirit, living and laboring for others, could thus fall into utter despair ? Could it ever fear coming to want, or at least could it really suffer and perish under any such morbid solicitude ? Indeed, it may be doubted whether a large, loving, working nature is likely to be affected by insanity, which would seem to have its root, in many instances, in a selfish introspection.

But while there is no virtue in the act that is performed without love, let us recognize the joy that consists, even with the sternest duty performed in this spirit. It blends with the most painful sacrifice that a mother makes ; it swells in the breast of the suffering patriot, and softens the pangs of the martyr. Paul, in all his toils and trials, cries out, " Rejoice evermore !" and Christ Himself, though " a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," was " anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," and, " for the *joy* that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame." Indeed, we may say that although the Saviour was *acquainted* with grief—a serene blessedness was the inmate of His deepest life ; for on the very thresh-

old of His great agony, and under the shadow of His cross, He says to His disciples, "My *peace* I give unto you."

The burnt offering and sacrifices—all methods of effort and performance—without the spirit of love, are empty; with that they possess an illimitable capacity and an inexhaustible blessedness; and therefore, as the great motive of action, love is the principle of the divine kingdom.

III. Finally, let me say that this element of love manifests its supremacy when it becomes an experimental element of the *heart* and the *life*. I need not dwell upon the obvious point in this proposition—the fact that the excellence of this divine principle must be a matter of spiritual consciousness, and not merely of intelligent recognition.

But there is something very significant in the Saviour's words, in the latter part of the text, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The Scribe who entertained such an intelligent perception of the true life of the soul, and confessed it as the principle of the divine kingdom, stood in the very vestibule of that kingdom itself. We know not whether he proceeded and truly entered in. But what I wish particularly to say now is, that these are words of great encouragement, and yet they are also words of warning.

For, in closing this discourse, I urge upon you the fact, that by mere *confession* of the supremacy of this law of love, without experience of it, not only may a man be no better, but he may be *worse*. For the por-

tal of knowledge is not the arena of life. And there is something very perilous in this faith of the *vestibule*; more perilous than in a position of greater positive error. In religious faith, in religious feeling, sometimes there occurs a crisis, when one has abandoned the old ground, but has not positively taken his position upon the new. When his *intellect* is convinced, but his *heart* is not carried over. When he has surrendered the old restraints, the superstitions and false conceits, but has not yielded to the sovereignty of the divine law of love. He is not far from the kingdom of God, and yet may I not say that it would be better for him if he were further off?

At least, it surely *is* a position of great peril, to give up the old ideas, to cut away these external and formal props, and yet not be subjected to the control of this inner law. Then there is nothing but self-will and recklessness of thought that have been engendered in the dissolution of the old reverential ties. Then liberty proves worse than bondage, because liberty has become licentiousness, and free thought worse than implicit credence, because free thought does not check practical atheism. Permit me to illustrate a religious truth by a public and political instance. It appears to me that, as a people, we are passing through a great crisis, and the sharp edge of the crisis is the fact that we have rejected the *old*, but have not surrendered with whole-hearted loyalty to the *new*.

Democracy—I use the term in its best sense, in its legitimate sense—Democracy, I may say, is Christianity in civilization—the social development of the

law of love. Now, in the name of Democracy, we have rejected the old notions—in *theory*, we have welcomed the new ideas. In *theory*, there is hardly a feudal rag left among us. We have clothed ourselves with results wrought out by the patient toil and sacrifice of others—we have entered into a heritage bequeathed us by generations of thinkers and sufferers who have gone before.

But renouncing reverence for feudalism, for crowns and crosiers, for all the old symbols of loyalty—what *do* we reverence in their stead? Do we reverence the supreme law of right in the soul? We are vociferous in praise of freedom. Is this freedom general, or individual and exclusive? We cry out, "Human brotherhood and equality." Are these only for ourselves as a race—only for classes? Is it true that we are not looking for the divine birth right of man *within*, in the moulding of the heart and the capacities of the soul, but only in the color of the face and the shape of the skull; and virtually proclaiming that God has written the charter of personal freedom on white vellum, not on black?

Now these very elements of democratic liberty are the elements of despotism, when they are monopolized and turned in for the behoof of a single man; and it is possible that they may prove to be nothing more than elements of despotism, multiplied by thousands, so long as they are exclusive, selfish, and greedy elements. If we quit the old heavy barge and take a steamboat, it will be better or worse as we use it. It will carry us quicker into port, but it will carry us quicker to de-

struction. It will carry us more rapidly through the Highlands of the Hudson, if we are inclined to go that way; it will carry us more rapidly over the Falls of Niagara, if we are inclined to go *that* way. And I say that, with these grand ideas, with these potent elements, we as a people are just in that critical state whence we shall emerge into the noblest social form the world has ever yet seen, or give birth to the most hideous despotism it has ever borne upon its surface.

And just like this, my brethren, is the critical condition, is the great peril of the *individual*, when he has removed the old sanctions of obedience, the bonds of ancient terror, but still only *confesses* the new and better conception. The principle of the Divine kingdom has not become the positive element of his inward life. Then I say, such a man is in a desolate and dangerous condition. The ancient fabric is torn down; the new temple is not erected. He stands out shivering in the bleak and barren space between the two. Then he will naturally feel a reaction; having experienced this result of tearing away the old props, he will look around now for some system which offers the most props; and at this point the Roman Catholic Church wins many of its converts. Or else the merely speculative intellect, that does not carry the heart with it, desperately drifts away into the regions of dreary negation.

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God!" "Not far!" These may be very inspiring words. Not far, O storm-driven mariner! Behind yon rocky

headland looming through clouds and embossed with foam, are the village church, the familiar school-house, the dear old home. Not far, O runner in the dusty race! the heart grows faint, and the eye-sight swims, but the goal is just ahead.

But, oh, how mournful, also, are these words "not far!" when the very truth they tell us intensifies the sadness of disappointment, the shame of failure and defeat. They who perished some time since in our vicinity, by the burning boat, were close to the shore. The poor dying girl, longing for home, and at every pause in her journey crying, "Are we almost there?" when she drew her last breath *was* "almost there." So in this spiritual movement and life-struggle. It seems to me the very keenest point of failure, the very depth of moral disaster, is, when we are "not far."

Brethren, let our faith be something more than that of the vestibule. Let us not stand there merely acknowledging and admiring the principle of the Divine kingdom. Let us enter. There *is* a law of love, whose glorious result is perfect liberty and perfect obedience. There *is* a life which is the highest attainment of our being. It is the life of perpetual communion, through Christ, with the Father, in the enjoyment of which, now and forever more, we are *in* and *of* the Kingdom of God.

XIV.

The Parables of Providence

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables

MARK iv, 13.

THE particular parable referred to here is the parable of the *sower*, of which the disciples had asked an explanation. But in complying with their request the Saviour took occasion to speak of parables in general—to indicate their purpose and significance. This form of teaching threw a symbolical veil over certain truths which a careless mind would not comprehend, or which a prejudiced mind would oppose. But to the willing and the teachable, parables only made these truths more vivid, and invited to profounder discoveries. Thus, the practical effect of the parables was not merely to instruct those who listened to the teachings of Jesus, but to *draw out* their qualities of mind and heart. Those who would not see, did not see—or, hearing, did not hear—what Christ really uttered; while those whose *dispositions* were right, looking attentively at the surface of the narrative, and desiring to be taught, saw more and more of

the essential facts which were enveloped in it. To those who had, more was given ; they were let into the mystery of the kingdom of God ; while to those whose dispositions kept them upon the outside, these things were only parables.

These parables were the multiform illustrations of a single and simple system of Divine truth—one great class of spiritual facts—composing “the kingdom of heaven.” When, therefore, by the means of any parable, this central truth was reached by the hearers of Jesus, it is evident that in this knowledge they possessed a key to the essential meaning of *all* the parables ; and so far as they were concerned, this method of instruction had produced its desired result. In the right interpretation of this parable of the sower, they possessed a clue to all that class of teachings. On the other hand, if they could not comprehend the meaning of so plain a symbolism, they would not understand any other. “Know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all parables ?”

Having thus considered the original bearing of the question in the text, let us now proceed to draw from it its application to ourselves. “Know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all parables ?” We *do* know this particular parable ; for Christ himself has given us its meaning ; and from this explanation we may gather the spiritual significance of the other parables in the New Testament. A school-boy knows now more about nature than Copernicus or Newton did—without, by any means, being the equal of Copernicus or Newton. For the same reason, pos-

sessing the aggregate teachings of Jesus and His disciples, and beholding them in the clear light of following events, we understand the sayings of our Saviour better than those primitive hearers did. But the text furnishes us with some special suggestions, to which, in the present discourse, I invite your attention. I observe, then, in the first place, that we need a leading principle of interpretation—we need a master-key—not only in studying the parables of the New Testament, but in all *life*. I will intensify this proposition. I maintain that if any man gets a correct view of one fact of life, he has a clue to the entire system of things—I mean he has a clue so far as *he* is practically concerned—in his present condition.

Does not this analogy hold good in almost every instance? There is the department of *science*. The great marvel in that pursuit is not any special result arrived at, but the very *method* of the pursuit itself. It is in the assurance with which the naturalist from a single fact constructs an entire organism, or a complete series. Give him the fragment of a skeleton—give him some little fossil bone, dug from the strata of the ancient earth—and he builds up the colossal hulk of the mammoth, or the megatherium. Let Newton ponder the fall of an apple, and he discerns the law by which a rain-drop descends to the ocean, and a planet swims round the sun. Thus rises the ladder of induction from the earth to the skies; and with one true principle the philosopher unlocks the wards of the universe.

The same thing is evident in the science of *mind*.

It is none the less evident because in that department of knowledge no such master-principle has been discovered, or at least agreed upon. The subtle controversies of metaphysics all spring out of the attempt to fasten upon some primal fact which shall settle the ground of knowledge, and authenticate the phenomena of intelligence.

So in the field of *morals*. We anxiously inquire whether a man has a *leading principle*—some master-key of motive and purpose; and we ask What *is* that master-principle? It does not require a great occasion, or a multitude of deeds. A small act will sometimes determine a man's ethical condition, and indicate the law of his mind. As a general rule, it will decide the point whether he has any fixed moral principle at all; and if so, of what kind his morality is—whether it is the absolute and immutable morality, or only the morality of expediency. It takes but a little while for a man of common shrewdness to make up his mind about this, and to be convinced that he has made it up rightly. One clear case about settles the question. There are men every shred of whose daily habits shows that really they have no moral principle at all, but go as the winds go. A small lie, if it actually *is* a lie, condemns a man as much as a big and black falsehood. The world judges with sufficient acuteness, that if a man will deliberately cheat to the amount of a single cent, give him opportunity and he would cheat to any amount. When unmistakably, in cool blood and mature thought, he has done this thing once, he may put on any amount of decencies, and

whine out all sorts of professions ;—we know his metal and have the measure of him. On the other hand, we do not need martyr-stakes, nor battle-fields, nor any public scenery, to show us the good and true man. His little acts, his daily conduct, will furnish tests. One flash reveals the diamond. One instance of positive temptation makes known the atmosphere in which he lives, and the law that is written on his heart.

Surely, then, all these instances are merely varieties of the principle, that if we know one parable we know all parables. And if the test thus holds good in the physical world, in mental processes, and in the region of morals, may we not expect to find it in existence as a whole—may we not expect to find it in the manifold experiences and mysteries of human life? I think it will prove true, that if a man thoroughly, or I may say even approximately, understands any one fact of his daily experience, in this result he has a clue for the whole of life. Or, to state the proposition in another form, he must have the right clue or theory of life or he cannot understand any single fact in life. It makes little difference which form we take. The knowledge of the one involves the knowledge of the other. As an instance, take anything : take any gift of daily Providence—take any misfortune—and I maintain that if we truly understand that thing, we have a key to the entire mystery of life. And the proposition is no more forcible when I say that we must have a key to all the mystery of life in order rightly to understand any single instance or fact of life.

But this suggestion is intimately connected with an-

other, the illustration of which will still further illustrate the meaning which I draw from the text. It will be seen, I think, that in its very terms these words of our Saviour are closely related to the point which I now proceed to urge. That point is this: that not only are there parables in the New Testament, parables in the Bible,—but there are parables in the entire scheme of our existence. I do not mean to speak metaphorically. It appears perfectly consistent with facts to say, that the method of Christ in the New Testament is the method of Providence in nature, and in human life. We are taught by parables every day, and through them we are led into essential truths. If we attend, if we search with an earnest spirit, we shall break through the mere crust of things to absolute and eternal realities. The more we lend of heart and soul to such realities, the more shall we receive. To him that hath shall more be given. And thus, touching reality upon any single point, we shall feel the heart and meaning of the great whole. Otherwise, blind and heedless as to these daily instances, we are ignorant of the true scheme of being, whatever may be the scope of our knowledge in other respects. For if we know not *this* parable, how shall we know all parables?

I have said that these parables are to be discovered in the entire scope of our existence. They appear as a symbolical representation, or veiling of facts, in things around us. We do not touch the spiritual fact itself;—it is masked by some material form, it is conveyed to us by some suggestion; and our discernment of it depends upon our attention to it and our sympathy with it.

In the sense thus indicated, *nature* is a great system of parables. Of course, if we take bald materialistic ground—if we say that the natural world has its profoundest and its exclusive expression in the results of science, my proposition may be termed fanciful. But surely nature is more than a series of physical facts or forces. It contains something better than what it yields to the chemist or the astronomer. If we regard it merely as a piece of mechanism, the inference remains that like any other piece of mechanism it exists for something beyond itself. If we stop with its influence upon the human intellect alone, we find that it imparts more than dry information of laws and phenomena. It serves a higher end than this in the general culture and enriching of the human mind. The geologist, or botanist, gets something more than the items of his special science. He imbibes inspiration for all his faculties, and gains a larger measure of mental power.

How much more important than the mere fact is the subtile life that flows through the fact, elevating the plane of our own being, and sending us with finer and more comprehensive thought into the fields of meditation and of effort! Nature will not stand as a mere cabinet of dead forms, or a gallery of catalogued facts. She pours into the soul of man mystic currents of spiritual life, and draws him with "the sweet influences of the Pleiades."

But if in its relations to the intellect nature reveals itself as something more than an assemblage of scientific facts, it presents still deeper meanings for the

soul. To that this external universe unfolds itself as the vail of a spiritual essence, and all things which it contains are symbols of Divine intelligence and love. Thus every little flower becomes a parable suggestive of-something greater than itself, while to the same end "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Some spiritual law, some inward truth, is veiled in these transient draperies of sense and time. Hill and valley, seas and constellations, are but stereotypes of divine ideas appealing to and answered by the living soul of man. How else can we explain the immeasurable *suggestiveness* of everything which the human spirit feels but never can completely express? Surely, it is not a fanciful view of nature to consider it as a vast volume of parables, veiling yet suggesting spiritual realities.

And in this way we may regard the trials, the vicissitudes, the entire round of things making up the sum of human experience. Each of these unfolds some providential lesson containing more than appears upon the surface, often veiling spiritual blessings under forms of temporal calamity; the most common fact—incidents of the wayside and the market, the field and the home, being the crust or shell of hidden and divine meanings, into which, if we look, as the disciples of Jesus looked into *His* symbolical teachings, we shall discern the purpose and grasp the real significance of life.

As Christ taught His hearers by the sea-side and on the mountain, so day by day Providence is teaching all men by parables; teaching those that will attend

and consider. Often are these parables indeed "dark sayings," and the symbol we encounter is a sad and perplexing riddle. My friends, I put the question to you—*Is* all the meaning of life upon the surface? Is the fact of the moment the ultimate fact? Are we to regard nothing but the visible and temporary phase in which things occur to us? Or, shall we say that these are sent to lead us to something better—something spiritual and permanent—and that their very object is to *try* us; to test our dispositions and qualities of soul; to prove whether we really would know more of our being and its relations than we can gain from a superficial glance; to settle the question whether we desire a profounder and more lasting good than this world can give? The great system of the world seems to move parallel to this plan—that to those who *have*, who cherish this spiritual desire and this spiritual vision, more is given; even in worldly trial and loss far more and better is given—while those who have not, whose dispositions are sensual and earthly, in the vanishing of temporal good lose even that which they had, lose *all* they had. It appears then to be sound doctrine to say that human life, and especially the deeper shades and mysteries of human experience, are involved with parables.

For instance, there is the parable of *disappointment*, coming in the symbolism of a driving and relentless fate that balks faithful endeavor and blasts reasonable expectations. The sower patiently scatters his seed, watering every furrow with honest sweat, but no harvest ripens for him. The results of his pains-taking

toil are poverty and neglect. He plants, but others gather. The seed-grain of his hope has been snatched up by the fowls of the air, and trampled by wayside feet. He sees others who have done no more than he ; nay, who perhaps have labored less faithfully in their lot, who have attained their ends even by mean and dishonorable expedients ; he sees these moving onward in the full sweep of prosperity, while he, as the winter of life closes around him, and the snow begins to whiten in his hair, and the powers of his mind and body fail, falls defeated, sore-hearted, broken, upon the verge of the grave. Is it any wonder that thousands in this condition ask what life means, and throw out doubtful questions as to its purpose ?

Does not *death* often appear as a dark parable ? Perhaps to many it is a wonder that it should come at all in a universe that is so full of possibility and of beauty—a wonder that it should stand as an irrevocable ordinance in the government of a merciful and Almighty Creator. But especially is it a wonder that it should come, as it often does, not as the crown and fruition of a life filled up and ready for a larger purpose ; but as a canker in the bud, as a mildew on the young and gentle flower, as a blight falling in summer on the unready though shining grain. What does it mean to the mother, with her infant hope pale and stricken in her arms ? What does it mean to those who walk in sad procession, carrying the young, the affectionate, domestic virtue, bridal beauty, virgin innocence, summoned thus imperatively into its dim and silent kingdom ? What does it mean when manly

usefulness, arm of strength, heart of bravery, teeming brain of genius, drop all their purposes and file off, as unransomed conscripts, in the great army that forever marches through its open gates?

There, too, are the *social* problems that meet us everywhere—we may call them parables of civilization. There are the ghastly riddles of vice and crime, of privation and poverty, of broken-hearted labor, of exposed and brutalized childhood, of man's infamy and woman's shame, of successful fraud and polite corruption, of religion red with persecution, and liberty stricken down in its own name, of pampered heartlessness and splendid guilt, and oppression that "maketh a wise man mad." Why these terrible enigmas, oozing from the very core of our refinements? Why these lagoons of abomination, soaking the very foundation-stones of this gorgeous Venice of material pomp and social exaltation?

Surely, then, we may call these, and similar instances, parables of Providence—hints and symbols veiling deeper meanings, pointing to wider and more enduring facts. And I ask if, in this very conception of things, there are not help and consolation for all who are stricken or troubled with the mysterious dispensations of life? In any such instance it may be that they do not immediately see its profoundest meaning, do not see all its meaning; and not doubting the wisdom and beneficence that are working in all events, as with a parable they will search for the significance that lies within and beyond. For now, taking up the proposition with which I started, I observe that there must be some

key by which to interpret these things. There must be some master-principle, by which if we gain a complete or even a proximate explanation of one great fact in life, we shall grasp the essential significance of the whole. While, failing in this, even in regard to the common instances of our experience, we have no real interpretation of life. If we know not this parable, how then will we know all parables?

Let us, then, venture to inquire, What *is* the key of interpretation for these parables, or problems, of human existence? And, in the outset, let us admit that we can find *no* key which in our hands will unlock every difficulty, and open for us the clear reason of all things. We may never be able to construct any theory of the universe which will bring all its proceedings into accordance with our finite standards and our human ends. Indeed, we may reasonably suspect the mental soundness of that man who proclaims that he has a complete theory of things. We may, at least, be sure that any scheme which makes man the head and centre of all things will fail in its applications. The mariner knows but little concerning the vast unfathomable sea, who assumes that it was made and spread out solely for the advantage of his little ship. We must move very humbly and cautiously when we approach the boundary line of final causes.

But so far as *we* are concerned, let us inquire what interpretation does, on the whole, give the best explanation of things? What most satisfies the human mind and heart? And it seems a reasonable answer to this question to say, that whatever serves to draw

out the meaning of one perplexing instance in life, and to harmonize it with the general aspect of things, may stand as the master-principle by which the experiences of our existence here may be understood.

Let us, then, consider some of the standards by which men may endeavor to interpret the parables of Providence. There are three of these, to which we will give our attention :

I. The Sensual Standard.

II. The Skeptical Standard.

III. The Christian Standard.

I. I observe that the first of these is essentially no standard at all. To the mere sensualist, life is exhausted in its phenomena. The fact, whatever it may be, stands only for the fact, and nothing more. We live to-day and die to-morrow, and our existence is merely a mass of sensations involved with a system of material objects. Practically there is only what we see, and taste, and handle. Joy is joy, suffering is suffering, death is death—and nothing more. So all our relations are restricted to the scope of our earthly vision. For us there is no God, no soul, no immortal future. We live upon the surface of things, and are engaged to the senses. We must snatch what we can of enjoyment from present possession, and when evil comes, bear up against it with apathetic philosophy, or succumb to it in mortal fear.

I am not describing men who merely *think* this theory of life, but men who *practise* it—much the larger class of the two. Few would positively affirm

this to be *their* view of life, still fewer in the depths of their being feel it to be so. The core of the human heart is hardly ever reached by it. Something within tells us that life is more than meat or drink, and that we hold other than transient relations to the great reality of things. These conditions in which we are placed call out faculties and excite wants that reach beyond themselves, and that these conditions cannot satisfy. This, then, is not a satisfactory interpretation of these parables of Providence, inasmuch as it is *no* interpretation.

II. But how do things appear when we apply to them the *sceptical* standard? We will suppose that in this instance a man has been roused from sensual stupor to make *some* inquiry respecting the problems of being. He feels that there *are* problems. There is at least intellectual curiosity, if not moral anxiety, concerning these things. He is assured that not merely phenomena, not merely sensuous experiences, make up the sum of this universe. There is something behind, something deep and hidden, and at this point he stops. He tells us there is a problem—there are parables—but these parables are all dark sayings. The key cannot be found. The purpose of things may be good or it may be evil. But meditation upon it involves only intellectual confusion. It is veiled in uncertainty.

Surely we must say that this is an unsatisfactory view of things. And it is admitted to be unsatisfactory. This is the upshot of speculation in this

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direction, that speculation is worse than useless. The question then is, Are we prepared to rest with this indefinite conclusion? Has *no* key to these mysterious passages, no interpretation to these "dark sayings," been given to man?

III. I repeat, nothing has been given which will clear up every perplexity, and set all things in harmony with our finite and human conceptions. But there is that which *does* explain these facts in harmony with our profoundest needs and desires. And this is the interpretation of Christianity—the interpretation of a filial faith. This enables us to maintain that these instances of earthly perplexity are only means to higher ends—processes of temporal discipline for spiritual training—methods of Infinite goodness working in harmony with a grand but unseen plan.

I know that this is a very familiar statement,—the common Christian statement about things. It forms the staple of religious homilies upon the trials and mysteries of life. But what I wish you to observe is, that it is the only *adequate* interpretation of these things—it is the only proximate interpretation. "Of course," you may say, "as a professed preacher of Christianity, we knew you would come to this result—it was a foregone conclusion in your mind before you touched the argument." Nay, my brethren, I *must* come to this conclusion, because there is no other that at all answers to the requirements of the case. In this conclusion we do at least gain *some explanation*. Falling back upon the theory of no-faith, we do not

after or remove the facts, and simply leave them in the dark. The Christian theory at least gilds them with the light of this assurance, that they exist for spiritual and beneficent purposes—purposes accordant with Infinite love and Divine wisdom. And if this conception as to a single experience in life is fixed and made clear to us, then we have a key for the explanation of the whole. It may not unlock every intricate ward of mystery—it may not open every secret door—but our filial Christian faith in all this labyrinth of perplexity is the only thing that even promises us help.

And, therefore, because this Christian and filial view of things *does* answer to a need of the human, heart and mind, because it *does* satisfy us at least as to *tendencies*, we may most reasonably accept it as the interpretation of these Parables of Providence.

And surely in our own experience we do feel or we shall feel the need of some such interpretation. In our trials, in our blessings, in the marvels of this human body, in the deeper workings of this human soul, there are parables for us all. And I say that one such instance looked upon in the Christian light of God's Fatherhood and the immortal life, will help explain the whole. Find out the hidden key-note in one sorrow, touch but the filial chord in one troubled heart, and you strike the prelude of a harmony that shall fill heaven when shadows and parables shall pass away in perfect revelation, and from all souls shall rise the confession—"Just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints!"

XV.

The Book of Human Life.

This is the book of the generations of Adam.

GENESIS v, 1.

THE chapter following these words contains a record of the patriarchs, from Adam to Noah. It is composed of a few genealogical items—simply a statement of birth, life and death. Properly speaking, it is a family register; its literal application being limited to those whom it actually mentions. But its moral significance has a much larger scope, and, whatever we do with the question of “races,” reaches to all of whom Adam stands as the human type. Indeed, “the book of the generations of Adam” suggests the entire book of human history and of individual experience, throughout all ages of the world. Even within the condensed statistics of this chapter, comprehending a period of almost two thousand years, what depths of thought and what interests of life are crowded! Whatever atmosphere of the marvellous and the Divine lingered around those patriarchal ages

° Preached at the close of the year.

—whatever quality there may have been in the first fresh juices of mortal life to preserve its vitality and prolong its career ; and though the glimpses of God may have been clearer then, and communion with Him more close, the essence of our humanity was the same as now ; there were the same springs of action, and the same heart of emotion. But if Seth, and Jared, and Methusaleh, and Noah, were not separate from the common stock, then “the book of the generations of Adam” does not terminate with the chronology of the fifth chapter of Genesis. Like the ancient scroll, unrolled as it was read, this book has been drawn out through all the successive centuries, lettered with the inscriptions of human change. Or, like a modern volume, still incomplete, leaf after leaf has been added to it, in the process of man’s achievement and of God’s plan, from Adam until now.

To bring the form of illustration which I have chosen as the frame-work of the present discourse, to a practical point, I observe, that “the book of the generations of Adam” may be viewed in a three-fold aspect, as

- I. A book of human history.
- II. A book of human experience.
- III. A book of human character.

I. In the first place, then, there is a book of *human history*. This is a truism, and yet it implies a great deal. For notice, in the outset, that it indicates something more than mere chance-work, in the course of

human events. We must not confound metaphor with substance, nor treat analogies of fancy as though they were analogies in fact. But there is this resemblance between the volume of human annals and a literal volume—that the one like the other must have had an *intelligent origin*, a *mind* must have conceived, ordained, and presided over it. And if so, then there must be a *purpose* in it—there must be some *significance*, some *plan*, running along through it. We may not be able to find out this plan; and what we assume to be its significance may not really be so. Probably we make a great many mistakes in our deductions, and our theories are often shallow and absurd. But this need not hinder us from concluding that there is a plan, or cause us to suppose that there is no steady significance at all, and that this great mass of humanity sweeps purposeless through the centuries. Look through the universe at large and you find that everything is evidently *designed*—is evidently adjusted to an end—is so fitted to accomplish certain results, that no scepticism can cheat us of the belief that it had an intelligent origin, and is subject to intelligent control. In tracing out the various classes and orders of being in nature, we read off, as it were, printed or published copies, the original types of which are in the Divine mind itself;—so clear are the evidences of *system* in the natural world, and so surely does system prove forethought and purpose. But is there a Divine plan in the material world only? Is there none in the intellectual or moral world? Is the animal economy governed, and not the human? Is there design in the

movements of classes and individuals, and not in the general history of mankind? The slender conduits of a flower or a leaf, the finest nerves in an insect's eye, are regulated by unerring laws. Surely, then, the career of nations is not without an appointed orbit. Is the lesser taken care of, and the greater unprovided for? We may argue that the very greatness of humanity appears in the absence of guidance or of fixed intention; that whatever its relations to matter, or whatever the analogies between it and the external world, it is something very different from organized bodies or physical forces, from rolling planet or flowing river—and that its dignity is made manifest in its freedom from limitations, and in its power to work out a destiny of its own. Even if this were so, it would not prove the lack of a plan in human history,—only the grander methods by which that plan is to be accomplished. It leaves interstices for man's free will, but does not shatter the network of the Divine sovereignty. But humanity *has* its limitations and its laws, all the more majestically revealed by the very fact of its freedom. This evidence of a superintending principle which appears in the history of man is not less, but more striking, than that which is revealed in the natural world; and if we must ascribe the one to Divine control, we have far greater reason to do so in regard to the other.

But let us not accept this conclusion merely as a formal, religious way of reading the great book of history—a proposition which, as a matter of course, you expect the preacher to offer, but which the philoso-

pher and the man of the world will look upon with suspicion or indifference. I maintain that if this is a false reading, then is history an inexplicable chaos, and the higher departments of the universe are less provided for than inferior sections. On the other hand, if it is the true reading, then it is no mere formal conclusion. It is a fact always fresh and inspiring, that God fore-cast the great outlines of human history, and holds the volume of its teeming events in His own hands. It is consoling to detect His device in the initial letter, and to see His own autograph written across the page. In the wild sweep of events, in the complexity of transactions that almost drown our hopes, it inspires us to think that in His own calm eternity He projected this book of the generations of Adam, and that, opening for darker or for brighter issues, it lies on the steps of His throne.

And if consoling, so also is it instructive and full of needed warning, to feel God's hand in the thick of affairs, to know that every lie shall be cancelled, and every truth come out in its own proper light ; to see the lines of a rectifying Providence, sometimes faint, but always sure, running through the ages. Such a faith in the Divine origin of humanity and in a controlling God is as rational as it is religious—as far removed from superstition on the one hand, as it is from a cheerless atheism on the other. At least, let me ask, If the religious reading of history is not the true reading, what is ? Where shall we find a more true or a better reading ?

Again, looking upon human history as a book, we

regard it as having a *beginning* and a *development*. It is not a monotonous repetition of events, but a progress towards an end. Studying it apart from the light of revelation, as a representative record of human civilization, it commences with myths and symbols, and gradually expands into the abstract and definite science of our own day. Many a fanciful picture adorns its earlier pages ; many a beautiful fable is mixed with its elementary truth. But as these fade away in clearer knowledge, and facts take the place of poetic shapes and colorings, it grows all the more rich and interesting. New harmonies come out, and records of splendid achievement find a place. True, it also unfolds much that is monstrous and discouraging ; fearful revelations of human sin, and problems which seem to grow inexplicable. Sometimes in pondering its developments, it seems as though the leaves had been turned back, and we were reading some primeval or mediæval page. But perusing this book with a comprehensive and discerning spirit, we find it, on the whole, a register of growth and improvement. Our better knowledge shedding light upon these forms of evil, shows more of their intrinsic hideousness. A fuller life stirring the energies of the human soul, rouses the activity of the bad as well as of the good. But surely the grand current of events runs not downward or backward. The spirit within these rapid wheels of time, turning them this way and that, still moves them forward and to blessed ends. Human progress is not an affair of human measurement, but goes on within the scope of His transactions with whom one

day is as a thousand years. "The book of the generations of Adam" is a record of advancement; of a better future slowly yet inevitably unfolding out of the past.

And once more I remark, that this Book of human history has its *lessons*. I have said that we can hardly construct a satisfactory theory of things as a whole. It might be a difficult task to prove that history steadily teaches this or that point,—there are so many complications in events, and we are so liable to be deceived by partial or superficial standards. But if it cannot always be read for wide applications, or as an absolute standard, we may study it for special purposes. It inspires us by great examples. It shows us the beauty of goodness. It teaches the uses of evil. And we may draw from it two conclusions. First, that human nature is the same in all ages. That the springs and elements of action do not vary—only the circumstances. That we ourselves are the weak and tempted man of whom we read upon some storied page; that with like trials we should be apt to do as he did; nay, that in our own theatre of action we actually do as he did. We may learn, too, that ours is the privilege of all noble performance. That, though with less elevation before the eyes of the world, in our consecration to the right, in the bravery of principle, we may act as did the hero or the martyr. Every man in this world, be he boot-black or emperor, is a complete instrument. He may be of greater or less compass, but he has all the harmonies—the entire diatonic scale, every chord, every octave. In some

way the eternal grandeurs strike him, sounding the deep tones of faith and conscience ; in some way the world touches the meaner and flatter keys. The great thing to be considered is, what kind of music he habitually makes. In his own way, be it ever so narrow or faint, he has his chance of adding to that symphony of heaven upon earth which all good men help to make, and by which they march. This, then, is one lesson which we may surely draw from the book of human history,—that the men of whom we read differed from each one of us only in conditions, not in the springs and ends of action.

And the other lesson to which I alluded is this—that righteousness triumphs. Of course, we must not employ the measurement of years, hardly of centuries. But we must take up a lapse of time so comprehensive that we can surely say of anything—"It remains"—"It is permanent." Evil may ride in rampant victory, and falsehood sit crowned upon a throne. They may triumph so utterly, they may reign so persistently, that offended souls may cry out in mournfulness or in indignation—"O Lord, how long?" Longer than your lifetime or than mine, it may be. Longer than any prophet can see into the future. "But what will *finally* abide?" that is the question. What does abide now from all the life of past ages? Not the material forms of things. Not the external conditions in which truth found its hindrances, or error its strength. Only ideas live. Only principles remain, to hold dominion over the earth, and to inspire men with their own life. Corruption may mark an

epoch. Persecution may domineer. But this is no criterion of final ascendancy. Voluptuousness ruled in the ancient cities of the East. But their magnificence is dust, and only the pure truth now shines out upon us from their giant skeletons and scattered bones. Power put forth its armed hand to crush the infant Faith in heathen Rome. But heathen Rome is not, and the infant Faith stretches its sceptre over lands that never saw the imperial eagles. Let us estimate not what prevails in one time, but what prevails in all time. Let us notice not the transient shape of things, but the noiseless spirit that leaps out of them. After the volleying musketry and the roll of drums, goes the resistless march of ideas, invisible and with silent footsteps.

“Avenge,” cries the poet,

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie bleaching on the Alpine mountains cold.”

But there comes no visible vengeance, no flash from the sky, no retributive thunderbolt to strike the bloody persecutor from the earth. And yet those martyred saints *are* avenged. Those bleached bones preach with everlasting testimony. And God's truth, like a sentinel, paces the bleak ramparts round about them, to vindicate their cause, and to consecrate their resting-place forever. Therefore, we must reckon as successful not the thing that is exalted in splendor and that flourishes in outward signs of power; but the thing that abides—the ideas that went out of Paul's dungeon, and from lonely Patmos; out from arenas

and catacombs ; from the flames of Cranmer's red-hot stake and the bloody scaffold of Sidney ; from the psalms in the little cabin of the Mayflower and the peaceful council on the shores of the Delaware.

Reckoning by these standards, I repeat, we draw from the book of human history the lesson that righteousness triumphs—that only God's Laws remain supreme. A great lesson to inscribe on the banners of a nation ; a great lesson to write on the walls of senate-houses ; to print deep in the hearts of those who make the laws and decide the destinies of a people.

Surely, then, it is instructive to regard human history as a great volume—"the book of the generations of Adam"—full of strange events, but also of unerring laws ; full of the deepest interest and the loftiest promise ; marked with many a trace of sin and suffering, but also stamped with God's own hand. A great volume ! ever unfolding, turning leaf after leaf as the swift years pass away.

II. I observe, in the second place, that "the book of the generations of Adam" is a book of human *experience*. A book of the deepest interest to every man for himself, and also of the deepest interest to those who look on if only they will heed. No man's existence is really insignificant ; no human life is uninteresting. That life bound up in the homeliest coverings, and found in the most common-place conditions, is really a volume of great events and pregnant lessons. There are two such events at least which enclose the career of every child of Adam.

Birth—the advent of a conscious being ; the blossoming of a human soul ! Here is a matter of thought for us if we were only alive to the interest which is contained in the most common things. Out of such things in the material world the grandest discoveries are made. In substances right around us are concealed those unseen forces that may drive the wheels of civilization, and unfold the destinies of the world. But if such are the elements of interest in material things, how profound should be the emotions awakened by the birth of a human being—the introduction into life of a conscious and ever-unfolding spirit ! New hopes, new fears, new streams of affection, are then set in motion. The circle of human relations is enlarged—the aspect of the past and future is changed. Take the most humble man you find in your daily walks—take the merest fragment or wreck of a man,—the beggar, the drunkard, the child of shame. Consider with what likelihood, when that one was born, somewhere there was the deepest interest. There was the marvel of a new soul, plastic from the hand of God, and clothed in wondrous material drapery. Very likely that now uncouth and grimy face once looked beautiful, at least to one, as it lay in the embrace of that love which it had awakened, and which went rippling upward from a mother's heart. Or if orphaned and outcast, still there was a *moral* force sent into existence, with which no energy of the material universe can be compared. No one comes into this world of whom we may not say—“Wonder of God's workmanship ! spring of life never to be exhausted ! incarnate spirit, whose earthly career

will be longer or shorter, but who at all events will burst this shell of flesh and go forth among the realities of eternity!" And this incident of birth, this initial fact of individual life, constitutes one passage in "the book of the generations of Adam."

And to close that mystic volume, be it no longer than a span, no more pregnant in its contents than the record upon an infant's tomb-stone, there is the experience of *death*, the messenger who writes the "finis," who puts a clasp on the book and lays it by forever. Sometimes upon that clasp there is a date and epitaph, a little flourish of pomp and honor, and sometimes, as in life, it is left homely and undistinguished. But this is about all the difference in the end between those who, in their lives, were so marked off and divided. Whatever circumstance may have been crowded between that introductory and this final leaf, these are the conditions that bound and characterize each and all,—infant, patriarch, hero, slave, philosopher, clown! In these passages your lives ran in a common experience. You each and all entered life helpless and with feeble breath; helpless and with feeble breath you vanished out of it. And how much there is in this to make the book of every man's life, even of the most ordinary man's life, of the deepest interest to us! How much to freshen within us a sense of the Fatherhood that embosoms us all, the Providence that cares for us all, the destinies that obliterate so many of our vain distinctions! For by and by, with very few exceptions, these will be almost the only fixed data as to any of our race now upon the earth, as to any of ourselves—

data which any man shares in common with the most insignificant. "He lived!" "He died!" So did the king who reigned right royally, so did the peasant who was placed coarsely and meanly, so did Dives, and so did Lazarus at his gate, thousands of years ago. So, O rich man, with your estate and equipage! so, O candidate for human honors, heaved for a little while on the top-wave of popularity! so, O maiden, supreme in your little court of beauty!—so will you fade and vanish, leaving little more than the fact of your being and the place of your ashes, nay, your existence itself only made evident by those ashes, those ashes themselves, as the years roll on, dissolving—and so there will be nothing to distinguish you from the poor, and the despised, and the ungainly.

But do you hope to live in tender memories and sweet extracts of affection, in the circle of the friendly and the loving? So you may. But so the poor and obscure will, thrilling pulses that their own pulses have throbbed against;—some heart keeping green and fresh for them longer than their graves do; some little space of earth tapestried with kindly recollections of their homely and honest lives. Nay, the poor may cherish a deeper and more enduring remembrance of their departed ones than the rich and great. They have less to distract them from it, and perhaps more trials to keep it fresh and sweet. They have no occasion to slaughter their affection over the dead man's will, or by envies and jealousies to mar that bond of sympathy which has twined them together. There are not so many living voices speaking to them kindly and

encouragingly, that they should forget the familiar voice that is now silent at the fire-side. They have not so many broad acres that they overlook the humble mound in the churchyard. Therefore memory may be the richest treasure that they have. The poor man may struggle on, feeling as if the last pressure of his dead wife's hand were the only bond to hold him to effort and to duty; while the hard-working mother may wear her child's memory in the heart as a jewel which flashes a celestial light around her path for evermore.

But, rich or poor, obscure or grand, in a little while these household circles themselves dissolve, and these remaining friends themselves drift away, and the memory becomes a tradition, and the tradition is forgotten.

It is a very common reflection, but surely it comes very impressively to us with every closing year, that those who now make up the multitude of the gay, the busy, the distinguished, will soon fall back into the indiscriminate dust that covers all the ages behind us. Our little circle of notoriety and influence—the great man of his associates, his party, his sect, his generation even—how soon swallowed up in the expanse of the common ocean. As the mists of time settle down, how little can we distinguish the king's crown from the beggar's head! How soon these distinct individualities became merged in that general mass which makes up the one great volume—"the book of the generations of Adam."

But you may say—"Influences will go out from individual lives, that will show that these have existed,

and that will give to each a kind of earthly immortality." But this depends upon our *use* of special conditions which fall to our lot between these two limitations of birth and death.

These, then, are the common features in the great book of human life. But there are features peculiar to each of us which make up the significance of that volume. Each has his own capacities and blessings, his own trials, his own phases of providential action. And in what I have said of this vanishing and absorption of our individual peculiarities, I would not cover up the fact that the force of our lives *is* felt in some way. As the years pass, as the very last leaf of this year now rustles in the winter wind, I would that each of us might think seriously of the portion that is already turned over forever; of the little space that at the most remains between the limits of birth and death; the passages of so many years recorded and gone. And, in connection with this thought, I would also that each of us might inquire what *sort* of a volume of general influence we are making up—an influence that will remain when we have departed—an influence that goes out now, every day. Reflect, I beseech you, upon the conditions of your past life—reflect upon the fact that out from it, as surely as you live, for good or evil, there goes an influence adding to that volume of common destinies—"the book of the generations of Adam."

III. But there is a book more positive and personal in its contents than any I have yet mentioned. It is the

book of *human character*. It is the book of every man's inward and spiritual life. This is a sacred volume ; a volume that no other man's eye can read, the perusal of which we ourselves are apt to neglect, but one that is ever open to the Omniscient eye, and whose pages are the red-leaved tablets of the heart. This is the true private account of stock and capital, of profit and loss. O merchant or mechanic, so anxiously balancing your accounts for the year ! there is stated the precise amount of your real wealth, the only scrip and substance you can carry with you when the years pass away. O politician, man in office and in power ! there is the register that enrolls your actual honors, and shows to *what* you are elected. The types of character stamp deeper than printing-presses, and will tell your story better than all the newspapers. O mariner ! there is the log-book of years, declaring what course you have held in your earthly voyage ; there is the chart that indicates upon what shoals and breakers you may be driving now. Young man— young woman ! there is the journal of your daily life ; there is the remembrancer that records no compliments, no flatteries, only the plain honest truth ; blotted it may be with passages of sin and shame, and let us hope here and there with penitent tears ; dedicated, let us pray, for its future pages, with a new year's resolution that shall be answered and blessed in the record. Is not that indeed a most important book, the book of character, that is surely and constantly written in the soul's life of every one of us ? Remember that beside the volume which goes on with every year, re-

ording what we gain or lose of outward possession, what we have or what we do, there proceeds this inner record stereotyping what we *are*.

And let me say, that this is a book which is both in our own control, and is not in our own control. It is in our control before we speak and act, but not so ever after. The evil passion—its characters are all engraved there, and what a fearful picture is it to look back upon! The angry word—there it is printed quicker than the telegraph can do it. And our life in all its passages is there, translated into imperishable history. Surely here is a “book of the generations of Adam” in which we are, of all things, most deeply interested. Let me ask, Do we keep it shut? Do we never consult those interior pages, in our carelessness, or in our guilty consciousness? Vain is our neglect. The story is written—whether we peruse it or not, it is written—and it will come out in the unmistakable lines of *character*.

But what wise and earnest man would fail to look into that volume, especially in these closing hours of the year? It is a book for you to ponder in your own solitary searchings; it is a book for you to compare with that other volume which contains the Divine precepts of Jesus. Oh, how unwise is he who lets that record proceed, as most surely it does proceed, and who does not see or care what is written in it!

“The book of the generations of Adam!” Vast and diversified volume, handed down from age to age, with all Time’s record printed in it; each year adding to its bulk; each year suggesting how swiftly these

generations pass away! How momentous the interest gathered in it! Great life-journal of the centuries! What marvels, what mysteries, what tears and prayers, what shames and splendors, are traced all over its pages!

"The book of the generations of Adam!" a book of human experience, varied in each copy, yet essentially the same! marked by the same initial and final facts, yet diverse in its record according to our use of our conditions.

"The book of the generations of Adam!" a book of human character, unfolding for each of us a deep and private record,—a secret diary of the heart and the conscience! And now, my brethren, we have almost done with another year. Shall we not pause over these recorded pages of the *past*, and say, with earnest prayer, what, God permitting, that secret writing shall be in the *future*?

See, the last leaves of the year are turning! turning to record the course of nations. Trembling leaves of destiny! turning to take the memorials of human experience in birth and death and varying action. Most momentous of all, these leaves are turning to recount the inmost decisions of our souls. Externally there may appear no difference. There may be no outward sign, no jar of transition, when the old year passes into the new. But in the silence of outward and material things, all the more impressive is the spiritual suggestion. In the still and solemn night, when the moon shines down upon the graves of departed generations, upon the fitting ghosts of our past

hours and the shadows of our neglected opportunities, in the great cathedral of time a leaf is turned,—a leaf on which all who live will surely write. My friends, carrying the resolutions of the passing year into the first hours of the new, what, oh, what shall be *our* record on the page that God may freshly open for us in “the book of the generations of Adam?”

XVI.

Human Limitations.

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
MATTHEW vi, 27.

THE knowledge of human limitations is an element of human power. Having ascertained how far we can actually go, the area of possibility is then made plain; and the energies which have been diffused in fruitless effort may be called in and concentrated upon available ends. To a mind thoroughly bent on any great and good achievement, every failure is a latent success. In every obstacle that balks its enterprise, it catches a hint of the true method; and wherever it strikes the boundary-wall of attainment, it identifies the one sure channel that leads on to victory.

I would, therefore, call your attention to the fact, that in the text our Saviour does not teach a lesson of *fruitlessness*, but a method of *power*. It is no disheartening voice that speaks here, and says—“*Because by taking thought we cannot add one cubit unto our stature, therefore truth is unreal, and good unattain-*”
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able—so, let us have no aim and put forth no strenuous attempt ; but let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” But Christ’s question, in the words before us, is really an inspiring exhortation which rallies our souls, enfeebled by unproductive anxieties, or probing with vague desire the realm of mystery ; to one great end—one worthy and victorious effort commanding all the energies of our being—seeking “The Kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

Our thoughts being called in from vain speculations, may be concentrated upon practical ends, and thus they will become so much additional force in the compass and volume of our life. Let us, then, consider certain limitations which are suggested in the text, and the possibilities which they still leave open to us, and upon which, therefore, we may concentrate our powers. I will distribute what I have to say at this time under the heads of,

I. Natural limitations.

II. Limitations of the human intellect.

III. Limitations of moral effort.

I. I observe, then, in the first place, that the text suggests certain *physical* or *natural* limitations, respecting which it is in vain for us to take anxious thought. In fact, this is the direct application of the words before us. We cannot, by any amount of desire or effort, alter a natural ordinance. “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” Of course, nobody attempts to do this thing

literally. Christ did not charge any one with making such an attempt. The very manner in which he puts the question indicates the result as one for which no man would be so absurd as to strive. But the fact of His asking the question also shows that there are things just as unattainable concerning which men *are* anxious. It is as though the Saviour had said—"If by taking thought you cannot add one cubit unto your stature, why take thought about things that are equally vain?" This, as it appears to me, is the point of the Saviour's argument here; and it is an argument similar in its tendency that I now wish to urge.

I ask, then—Why should we take anxious thought concerning other limitations of our humanity which are just as unalterable as our bodily stature? For instance, there is the fact of mortal decay—the brevity of our lives. Now, of course, nobody attempts to prevent these ordinances that are so unpreventable. But men are prone to do what is just as useless. They lament and murmur over this decay and change. They indulge miserable thoughts about it. Therefore, in such cases, the question is strikingly appropriate—"Who by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Who by taking thought, who by anxious murmuring or complaining, can add to the sum of his days, or balk inevitable decay? And if we cannot do this, then why take so much anxious thought about the matter? Here is a natural limitation of our humanity, upon which it is in vain to waste the energy of our souls in gloomy meditation.

Ah! yes—there is one chord in our human con-

sciousness—one key-note in our mortal experience—which utters the same testimony, whether for sceptic or Christian. It is the testimony of vanishing time, and of inevitable change. As the silver cord loosens, the revolutions of the wheel of life are accelerated. Months and seasons run together in ever-narrowing circles, until those long summers of our youth contract, as it were, into a single summer day, whose morning blossoms with June-buds and daisies, whose evening closes under a harvest-moon shimmering upon ripened fruit and corn all ready for the garner. With a more solemn prophecy comes each successive autumn, with more significant shadows embroidered in its gorgeous cloth of gold. In this fullness of time and production, when the earth lies like a horn of plenty overrunning at the brim,—in this rounded completeness of the year, we already begin to touch the cycle of decay. The face of nature never more beautiful, is never more pensive, and as the penumbra of the approaching change steals over its splendor it only typifies an awakening sense within us of irredeemable privileges, of narrowed power, of a hold that is slackening day by day. And each recurring season, though it be with an index of flowers, marks off a later figure on the dial of our years. Its quick-declining beauty symbolizes human substance and glory. Indeed, how does the perpetual renewal of the natural world mock our sure decay, and our never-returning bloom! *We* fade, and grow old, and perish, but nature keeps ever young. Be our care and sorrow what they may, the earth renews its pomp and the heavens their bright-

ness. All these processes are unaffected by our experience. The grass will grow as green, the leaves will twinkle as gloriously in the golden light, to cheer and welcome new generations a thousand years hence. How slight, then, is our significance in a world which is thus unmarked by our presence, and unaffected by our withdrawal! And how does this eternal circuit of nature intensify our consciousness of our own frailty!

But while this assurance of passing time and of mortal decay touches such deep chords in every human breast, it produces different results with different men. In some it settles into gloomy despondency or reckless levity; in others it leads to cheerful conclusions and practical effort. And we need not to be told which is the wiser method. It is of no use to grow sad and anxious because our years fly away and our vigor relaxes. For "who by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" Who can lengthen his days by repining at their brevity, or recall into his veins the juice of youth by pondering upon the decay that settles at his life-roots?

But do we say that this impotence of ours, this inevitability of natural processes under which our life wastes away, is itself the very fact that should make us sad and fill our souls with melancholy though abortive longings? But, if *abortive*, why cherish such thoughts? Is it not as idle for us to do so, as it would be to attempt adding, by painful tension of the mind, a cubit to our stature?

Our much thought adds nothing to our stature; adds nothing to our time or strength; in one word, it

gains no victory over natural limitations. And yet we dislike to own our mortal defeat and surrender to all-conquering events. Every period of life generates its peculiar ambition. "Man," says Sir Thomas Browne, "is a noble animal, splendid 'even' in ashes, and pompous in the grave." The boy strives for a precocious manliness. The young man longs to be a hero. In maturer years we covet other attainments, and gather about us the reputation of wealth or talent. The strong man cannot bear to give up under the stroke of disease. And equally noticeable are the bravery and pretension with which man confronts the changes of time, and masks the inevitable processes of decay. For *his* part in this universal aspiration the old man desires to appear "as young as ever," and prides himself upon his agility, his endurance, and his promptness. Perhaps we can hardly blame the envy with which one looks back upon the glorious dawn and exuberance of youth; that spectacle of new, fresh life, tasting nature at every pore, opening to a consciousness of all its powers, entering upon the heirship of the world, profusely lavishing time and strength in its feeling of boundless possession. No joy is like *that* joy of novelty and increase. No splendor of this world is like that splendor of life's morning, whose pomps and possibilities all stream before. And we can find but little fault with this garrulous vanity of the aged that turns "the almond blossom" into a laurel wreath, and carries "the burden of the grasshopper" with an elastic step. Only let us realize this—that no fond desire of ours, no

anxious lamentation, alters a natural law or prevents a necessary result. Let us *feel* so, because, in the full conviction of our natural limitations, we shall call in our energies and concentrate them upon that which *is* possible. Then we shall extract from each natural process its spiritual incitement, and make time, and decay and death itself, yield appointed discipline. In the ever-changing moments we shall rest with a more satisfied consciousness upon the permanent good. The ebbing of bodily vigor will leave a culminating majesty of spirit; and our thoughts, no longer drifting in vain regrets for the past, will intensify the faith that kindles up the future. We shall clearly see the work that pertains to such time and powers as are left to us, and calmly do it. Thus in feeling and effort fitted to our condition, the latter period of life will have a glory of its own, not *like* any other, but more excellent perhaps than any—as the winter landscape excels in hoary majesty. An aged Christian, with the snow of time on his head, may remind us that those points of earth are whitest which are nearest heaven.

I have illustrated my argument under this head by dwelling upon natural limitations as they unfold in the passages of *time*, but the consideration here presented is equally applicable to other inevitabilities of human life. I hardly speak to one who has not in some way been touched by these processes. Hardly a heart beats before me that has not been scarred in the battle of human experience with disappointment, or change, or bereavement. But, in each and all, the

truth stands clear, that we cannot alter by anxious thought these limitations of our mortal lot. This truth taken in itself is indeed bleak and discouraging, but taken in all its bearings it may impel us to direct our powers and hopes to that which *is* possible and lies at our hands. It may lead us to the conclusion that whatever in this great system of things is *inevitable* is also *beneficent*, inasmuch as it is the will of God. We may feel that the mortal enclosures of our trust and desire are only the shells of a better life, which like seeds yield their true purpose when bruised and buried. And instead of looking backward or downward in vain regrets, in these workings of thoughtful experience we may be inspired to look upward and forward.

II. But I proceed to observe that there are certain limitations of the human intellect respecting which we should heed the suggestion of the text. There are limits to human speculation which we ought to regard—which we *must* regard. There are boundaries beyond which we cannot extend the area of available truth. There are problems irresolvable by our reason, and from which we cannot detach a single cubit to add to the stature of our positive knowledge. In our curious exploration of things around us and within us, we arrive at points where all we can know is, that this or that is so ; and there is the end of the matter. Not that we are to discourage the exercise of free and bold thought. There is no limit to the *activity* of the intellect. There is no limit to *accessible*

truth. But there *is* a limit to the direction of the pursuit; there is a limit to the kinds of knowledge. There are certain land-marks in the very nature of things indicating the path in which we are to travel, though that path may be endless. The great deep of reality may incite us with the promise of exhaustless treasures, though around it all the baffled mind detects a mandate like the mandate that goes forth to the waves of the baffled sea—"Thus far, and no farther."

At least let us recognize this fact—that around us there *is* an Unknowable. There is a firmament of mystery in which we are enclosed, and all profitless speculation in this region is vain, not only because it *is* profitless, but because it dissipates those intellectual forces which might be employed upon practical achievements. And surely, whatever may be the mental benefit; whatever may be the ultimate hope even, in certain speculations; we should not dwell in these to the neglect of any indicated and attainable good.

"Who by searching can find out God?" Is not *there* a limit to a certain class of speculations? Observe, I say "a certain class of speculations." Not that I fall in for a moment with the conclusion that because we cannot know *all* concerning God, therefore we really know *nothing*; and that all our grounds of conviction are simply illusory or provisional. The impossibilities of intellectual achievement do not cancel the facts of intuition. Nor is it an argument favorable to revelation to urge that revelation itself can give us no real knowledge of the Divine. But the question is, shall we pursue fruitless inquiries

about God to the neglect of those vital relations which we may have *with* God, and to the neglect of certain uses to which we may put His works and His gifts? We do not know *how* He made the world, but shall vain anxieties upon this point eclipse the manifestations of His creative power, the tokens of His wisdom? Shall these intellectual perplexities counter-balance the evidences of His existence and His presence? Shall we plunge into depths where we cannot add one cubit to the extent of our knowledge, and so neglect this other sphere of actual results where we can add so much to that knowledge, and to our power, and our delight?


We do not know how God acts upon the human mind, or how He touches the issues of events. It is not likely that we ever shall know, at least in this our mortal state. But shall we therefore deny the legitimacy or neglect the blessings of *prayer*? Must a man get a correct philosophy of prayer before he prays? Must the child, ready to run into its father's arms, stop and study mental processes before it yields to the impulses of its love? Will you say to the bruised and bleeding heart, overswept with the anguish of sin or of suffering, "Hold back this impelling instinct of prayer until you can scientifically authenticate your prayer?" Oh, if we *did* act thus, not only how false would be our philosophy, but how much of real power and privilege should we waste and lose! Because we cannot explain all the mysteries of the Divine implication with the affairs of the world and of men, shall the universe virtually become to us but a dreary net work

of laws, instead of being the vehicle of a merciful Providence and a sympathizing Father?

Or, again let me ask, shall our inability to detect the logical hinge where the fact of Divine supremacy harmonizes with the fact of human free-will, weaken the sinews of duty, or cause us to surrender our filial reliance?

Surely we add nothing to our own stature, to our actual growth and substantial life, when we waste in vexing speculations those forces of the soul which we might concentrate in the work of obedience and the joy of reverent faith.

But if there are regions beyond the scope of our thought where we may wander with profitless if not irreverent curiosity, on the other hand there are areas for our effort in which oft-repeated failure often convinces us of a latent possibility. The attainable truth, the practicable achievement, throws out its hints and signals from afar. Permit me to draw an illustration from the material world and from the practical affairs of every-day life. Consider, for instance, what has been the inspiration of those who have essayed to conquer physical obstacles, and add to the dominion of man over nature. In all these efforts, whatever may have been withheld something has been granted. Man has wooed the material world as a lover woos his mate, detecting in every "no" a hesitating "yes." The granite wedges, the iron ribs, which he strikes with dauntless pertinacity, yield sparks of prophecy and echoes of hidden power. In reading the history of some decisive invention, we feel the grandeur of a



hereditary inspiration ; the lineal descent from man to man of the assured faith of some forgotten thinker, breaking out in abortive yet ever more hopeful forms. Each swart hand passing its crude work down to other hands that take it as a transmitted trust, until by and by some favored genius seizes it ; in the tangled mass of failures finds out the lucky, nay, the providential clue ; pursues it with unflagging force of thought and will ; and the long attempted project suddenly leaps out a completed and magnificent achievement. And then with what interest we look back upon those thrown-by devices—those medallions in the genealogy of invention—those lumbering pulleys and clumsy wheels. For in the crudest of them all we find the autograph of nature's promise ; the justification of the poor balked thinker's instinct, as well as of the inventor's success.

But now I would lead you up from these instances in the natural world, to consider how Christianity throws open for us the arena of *practical* achievement and *attainable* truth, and in that way secures our genuine growth and advancement. It does not call upon us for speculative effort, but for life and work. Not opening for us all the great deep of the Divine nature, or the mysteries of our own spiritual being, or the details of the future life, it promises to confirm our assurance, and enlarge our spiritual knowledge in another way. It makes *doing* the condition of *knowing*. "He that will do his will shall know of the doctrine." "He that loveth knoweth God." We grow in the comprehension of His being and of His perfec-

tions not when we attempt to fathom His infinity with our short measure of intellect, but as we draw near unto Him by the efforts of a kindred nature. Moral qualities are diffusive, and run at once, like electricity, through the entire chain of intelligences. But there may be an interval of many links between one man's *thought* and another's. I may not be able to comprehend the philosopher's theory as it lies in his own brain, or as it is propounded in his formula. But when he utters a generous sentiment I feel its full force dashing against my heart, and humanity is sprinkled with its spray, the wide world over. So, if I may be permitted to carry up the comparison, I cannot expect by anxious thinking to comprehend God, for His thoughts are not as my thoughts. But his love, as it comes to me in daily expressions of beneficence, as it throbs in all the fibres of my frame, as it sifts in sunshine and drops in rain, I can understand. And oh! as it beams upon me in the fulness of the excellence of Jesus Christ, I can understand it; and looking into that benignant and compassionate face, the weakest and most ignorant man in the world understands it.

Here, then, is the point of the argument. It is not that the intellect has no office to perform respecting spiritual realities; it is not that we may not speculate, nor try to open new crypts of truth:—but that we shall soon find that there is an impenetrable region, and there are facts concerning which we can only say that they *are*, without discovering *why*, or *how*. And I say that it is in vain for us to beat about here. Vain, because we do not add anything to our real knowledge, not

one cubic to our stature, while there is a path of possible attainment plainly indicated. It is by loving that we may know God ; and, however the intellect may confirm its testimonies, it is by *doing* Christianity that we shall become most completely assured concerning it. The great revelation which God has made is not to the speculative intellect, but to the deeper nature of man. It is a revelation made to the soul, to the heart, in the personality of Jesus Christ. And it is not by taking thought that we grow, but rather by drinking in the Divine influence, and living from the inspiration of that life of Christ. It is in this way that we really grow in almost any instance ; not so much by definite thought as by the subtle inflowing of a power that comes to vital affections and earnest sympathies.

For example, we grow in artistic culture, we grow in ripeness and delicacy of taste, as we stand before the great masters and drink in the fulness of their genius, rather than by perplexed efforts to find out the processes of their work. So our sense of beauty and of grandeur grows as we lean upon the breast of nature and let its moods and aspects pass into us, until morning and midnight and noontide splendor, and flushes of sunset, and rock, and woodland, and vast old sea, become tints and forces of our own being inwoven among the filaments of our innermost life. So, then, let our thoughts upon Divine mysteries lead where they will, it is by looking upon the ideal of Jesus and seeking to apply it in the practical results of righteousness that we add to our spiritual substance. Here there is no limit, no exhaustion. There is no

bound to duty, no barrier to moral achievement. But these *are* intellectual limitations, against which we beat in vain, and still persisting we add not a cubit to our stature.

For, let this fact be kept steadily before us. It is not merely the power we *expend* in profitless speculation that is to be estimated, but the power we *withdraw* from fruitful possibilities. However profitable in other respects it may be to speculate, it is worse than in vain if thus we neglect great and good ends. Let me repeat what I said in the commencement, that in the words before us, Christ did not teach a lesson of fruitless endeavor, but indicated a method of power. He did not say, "Thought is *all* in vain;" but it is in vain when you are trying to think out impossible results. Turn, then, from this, and think to a purpose. What knot in this many-stranded universe are you endeavoring to untwist? Even could you succeed, how much better would you be qualified to discharge those practical obligations which the religion of Jesus commends to your intellect and your heart? What power, what blessedness pertaining to your essential life, would the solution of such problems endow you with, that the filial faith and the practical work of Christianity will not now impart? O man, wearied and worried with speculation upon high and mysterious things! turn now to some work of unmistakable duty and benefit. And if you are driven by any strong conviction to say that these mysterious things must still be explored, it may be that in doing that work you will gain a steadier brain and a clearer eye for the exploration. Above

all, I say again, do not keep thinking there to the neglect of practical work. Turn your thoughts in as so much additional energy to accomplish that work.


O Church of Christ—so called—constructing sharp and subtle creeds; building intellectual fabrics upon which you cannot bring men to agree, with which you cannot add a cubit to the completeness of Christian harmony; for, while the heart of man answers to heart, thought does not answer to thought,—why not rely upon the method of “righteousness?” why not bind together the sundered fragments of that crucified body by ligaments of faithfulness and arteries of love? Ecclesiastical counsels, papal decrees, holy alliances, world conventions,—none of these can make a man believe that the world does not move, when he is assured that it *does* move. But all men, who feel the least breath of Christ’s Spirit, admire the good Samaritan, and when that Divine beneficence stretches forth its hands, with one consent they cry, “He doeth all things well!” Here is the real basis of Christian union:—not with your sectarian shears cutting out the exclusive pattern of the church, and the uniform that *you* say every Christian must wear,—excluding heretics who are as good as yourselves, and binding about your foreheads the phylacteries of opinion, instead of bearing the alabaster box of a fragrant piety and an anointing humanity!

And if the latter rather than the former have not been made the tests of the true Church, I ask, Whose fault is it that we have in the world such *Christian* incongruities? Whose fault is it that *Christian* civil-

ization develops the demon with the angel, and aims to patronize both? Whose fault, that cannon are wadded with leaves from the Bible, and woman is left to guilty despair, and man to unregarded destitution, and childhood to be suckled by sin and shame close by the altars of the Merciful One,—while intemperance rides death's pale horse through the streets; and, under the eaves of churches, the blood of that abused humanity which Christ represented flows to the ground, and its screams rise to the Lord of Hosts, unheard by Christians on whose hearts the texts of the Gospel lie as cold and hard as they do on the neighboring tomb-stones? Why, surely, it is the fault of those who have substituted opinion for character, and form for life;—who, instead of edifying the body of Christ blending divinity and humanity, not heeding intellectual distinctions, have sought to construct it with materials that add not a cubit to its stature.

III. In closing, let me say a few words upon one other point. I allude to limitations of *moral effort*. I maintain that even in this region there are conditions in which it is in vain to take anxious thought; vain to waste energies that may be turned to more profitable account.


It is in vain, for instance, to brood over past *sins* and *shortcomings*. He who is at all awakened in his spiritual nature, who is at all conscious of sin, of course will feel, and cannot help feeling, that "godly sorrow" that constitutes true penitence. And yet his feeling will blend the grief of penitence with the



energy of repentance, and he will not dwell in fixed remorse or paralyzing regret. In no way can we alter our past. With all our anxious thought we cannot add a cubit to our stature in that direction. What we have done is in the hands of God, and He will make His own use of it. This is to be with us no light or careless thought—nor can it lead to any such conception as “doing evil that good may come,” or “continuing in sin that grace may abound.” No man ever entertains such a thought who sincerely feels his sins. But in humble reliance on that pardoning mercy which is made known to us through Jesus Christ, we may leave the burden of our past guilt and neglect with God. Feeling the impossibility of altering what we have done, or have not done, so far as it stands in the fixed character of the past, we may be permitted to turn our thoughts and our hearts to that which we yet can do, and, with God’s own Spirit aiding us, redeem the time. There is no lightness for the conscience, but there is much meaning for the willing soul and the ready hand in that injunction—“Go and sin no more.” Behind us there is an irreparable past, but there is yet given us a practicable present. So, even in the highest moral conditions, knowing our limitations, we may recognize our possibilities and concentrate our efforts upon the work that summons us.

And now, my hearers, I exhort you to consider what for each of us is the great thing in life. We soon learn the limitations of the senses and of all external possessions. We soon perceive that the profoundest

good is not money, or pleasure, or worldly fame. Few men need any homilies to teach them this. They soon reach the conviction that the great good in life is at least inward and belongs to our enduring nature. But do we attain that chief end in the mere exercise of the intellect? How is it, for instance, with the exercise and culture of the imagination? For this is something loftier than mere external good;—this may yield delight when external things change and pass away. I answer, that in youth there may be, or seem to be, ample time for the play of this faculty. The young may let their thoughts go all abroad in the universe, and dream their glorious dreams of what may be and what might be. But in maturer years the limitations of time and of truth press closer upon us. We call our thoughts in from their gay and fanciful wandering, and put them to the search for fact. We take up the telescope and the crucible—we seek to strike the solid ground of life and nature. But still the years roll on, and mere intellectual seeking does not gain for us that which we can call the true good of life. The intellect may find delight in its investigations, but by and by the *heart* is touched. The universe grows deeper to our consciousness, and life grows more real. The dreams of imagination melt into stern experiences. The fabrics of our speculation fall away, and we are left close to the naked realities of life that press upon us and hem us in, and waken earnestly as never before the question, "What is the true object of our existence—what is for us the needed end?" And the answer is—Whatever unfolds and enriches



the true life of the soul ; whatever binds to an eternal and all-sufficient good ; a good that remains when age and change interpose, when intellectual vigor fails, and which imparts to us a living hope and trust, even though we look back upon many sins. A good that comes in the consciousness of self-sacrificing effort for others, of humble endeavor to serve God, and from communion with the spirit and life of Christ. A good so inward, so spiritual, so immortal, that we can give it no other name than " the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

XVII.


The Alabaster Box.

To what purpose is this waste?

MATTHEW XXIV, 8.

THIS question was asked when Mary broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon the Saviour's head. Matthew, in the passage before us, represents it as the general voice of the disciples; but according to John it was especially urged by Judas. It might prove profitable for us to dwell upon some of the features associated with the words of the text. The entire transaction involves those slight yet vivid expressions of individuality which continually impress us with the *truthfulness* of the Gospel narrative. There, for instance, is the contrast between Judas and Mary. On the one hand, behold the outpouring of a reverent and grateful heart; on the other, the cavils of a disposition cankered by covetousness, and inflamed by evil passions. Mary had received a brother back to life, and she showed her thankfulness in a costly offering. Iscariot, professing a zealous good-will, goes out to negotiate the price of blood. What a different effect moral excellence like that of Jesus

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produces upon different dispositions ! In one, it draws out all that is beautiful ; in another, it excites all that is hateful.

How touching, too, as well as just, is the consideration which Christ presents in reply to this remonstrance ! "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." And then, as the shadow of the impending event flows over his spirit and colors his thoughts, a still more special fitness in the gift suggests itself. "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burial." Jesus would countenance no actual waste—no diversion of good from legitimate ends ; and he has taught the human heart in every age to find objects for all its love, and channels for all its effort. But, surely, upon that occasion, even charity itself might waive its claims for One who opened the deepest *springs* of charity. The forlorn multitudes who, perhaps, will always accompany the march of society, might well afford that brief homage to Him who has enriched the poor with eternal life, dignified them with the consciousness of an immortal nature, and, where they must suffer, has taught them to endure.

Nor was the breaking of that alabaster box at all a *superfluous* display. It was in profound accordance with the spirit of the hour. The fragrance of the ointment was the gratitude of humanity, as it were, gushing out towards One who so deeply sympathized with and blessed it. And the offering itself was a proper symbol for Him whose work was drawing to a close. It was fitting that He should be anointed,

who, about to lie down in the embrace of the grave, was soon to rise a crowned conqueror over death. The rare occasion justified the rare gift, and a great crisis lent it a holy significance. There was *no* waste in the case, then, and our own hearts spontaneously rebuke the censoriousness of Judas, and respond to the praise which the Redeemer has linked with Mary's name.

But these topics are collateral to the main purpose of the present discourse. This idea of "*waste*" itself, as it seems to me, offers some suggestions which may be profitably pursued. While the idea itself is too often illustrated in the world, men may, and sometimes *do*, misapply the term. They evidently did in the instance connected with the text—and this suggests the propriety of considering some specimens of this misapplication.

I. "To what purpose is this waste?" This question is sometimes put respecting things that are *beautiful* and *costly*; and the assumption which the question involves is not always justified. There is a philosophy which repudiates everything that is not *useful*—and this would be all very well, did not its disciples hold a narrow idea of *utility*. For their conception contains only that which can be converted into food and raiment—which comes in a tangible shape, like money—which can grind and spin. Its maxims are all prudential. Its text-book is the arithmetic. Its cardinal virtues are industry and thrift. That higher utility which is involved in spiritual culture and a lofty

idealism it rejects, or knows nothing about. And so, according to its standards, there is a great deal of waste in the world beside that of meat or drink. If it had its way, it would daub the oracles of song with plaster, it would break up the master-pieces of sculpture to macadamize roads, and send the poets to the lunatic asylum. It cries out against any expenditure that goes for mere ornament, or the gratification of taste; thinks it a pity that good solid land, which might be cut up into square feet and sold for building lots, should be left for a park or a pleasure-ground in the heart of the great city—where the tired and the sick and the sordid might be blest by the exuberance of nature, and coming generations walk in grateful memory under the murmuring leaves. It sagely suggests that future generations should take care of themselves, and considers that any scheme is at once thrown into default, if, according to its terminology, something can be shown to be more "*practical*" and "*useful*."

What kind of a universe should we have had, built after the archetypes of this utilitarianism? No gorgeous tint would have glowed upon its surface—no soft flower have usurped the place of more "*useful*" things; no awful Alps would have lifted their sublime peaks away up to heaven; no cataract would have tumbled unappropriated down the cliffs. There would have been no song of birds fluttering where they will—no inspirations of morning glory—no vistas of the sunset opening magnificent gates for imagination and for faith; and even the earth would have dispensed with its curve of beauty.



I am speaking, it will be remembered, of that philosophy which applies the term "*waste*" to whatever is beautiful or costly; or which calls anything "*wasteful*" that overruns the limit of material and immediate use. I do not say that there never comes a just protest from this side of the question; I am only insisting that the protest from this side is not *always* just. Let it not be supposed that I do not recognize and condemn the sin of actual waste, so prevalent in this age and in this very city. There is a waste of luxurious epicureanism and gorgeous display, which proves itself a sin both by the injury which it inflicts upon those who are guilty of it, and upon those who suffer because of it. There is an extravagance which balks justice, and kills honesty, and breeds evil passions, and makes many a sumptuous drawing-room a hotbed of prurience and vice. There is an extravagance which sucks down credit and honor, and makes the business world every now and then creak and stagger like a foundering ship. And when we think of the misery with which this sumptuousness is so sharply contrasted—the filth, the famine, the defrauded labor and hopeless poverty—we may sometimes feel as though the pictures on the walls, and the figures in the embroidery, might turn into eyes and faces full of starvation, and blank ignorance, and neglected guilt. For, set the problem how we will, I fear that there is some connection between this superabundant living on the one hand and the wretchedness of God's poor on the other.


Of course I do not deny these facts, and have noth-

ing to say against that philosophy which attempts to solve one class by the other. I have much to say in its favor when it contends that in human society the essential postulate to anything higher and better is an adjustment of its material machinery. Every man knows by his own reason, by his own conscience, what in *his* own way of living is really waste, utterly superfluous as well as unjust. But, I repeat, we must set up no merely material standard of wastefulness or of utility. I am only urging the fact that we have faculties for other purposes than to eat, sleep and labor, and that that is not enough for us which enables us to live like comfortable and respectable animals; but that whatever gives our higher powers exercise and cultivation is useful in a nobler sense.

There are, in fact, two kinds of economy. There is the economy of our ordinary living—the economy which involves the demands of our bodily condition, of our honest dealing with others, and of prudent forethought. Let *that* always be heeded. But there is also an economy of our higher nature—an economy of our entire being—which must not be sacrificed to any spurious theory of economy. Let us make a proper distinction between the economy of *living*, and the economy of *life*. A man may find it necessary to scrimp his body, but it does not follow that therefore he should starve his soul. And sometimes when, as he thinks, he shrewdly saves a dollar, he may be doing a more extravagant thing than the profligate who spends one. He *is* doing an extravagant thing if, merely for the sake of saving his dollar, he bars out some other

tunity to become richer or better in his intellect or his heart. The practice of economy can hardly in any sense be called a virtue. It is frequently a *necessity*, like other qualities that are allied to it,—industry, promptness, probity. If these are virtues they constitute a pantheon by themselves. They do not stand in the same splendid temple with charity, self-denial, forgiveness. But there is one quality which cannot stand in any pantheon as a virtue, and that is, the habit of saving merely *for the sake* of saving—the fact upon which some men seem to pride themselves of having laid up so many dollars, some of them, perhaps, salted with the laborer's sweat, and with orphans' tears ; but *laid up*, beyond all bodily necessities, all just demands—for what ? Why, merely for the man to count them, and weigh them, and call them his own. And he all the while denying himself everything but what he calls “barely useful ;” planing down all the superfluity of living to the very last shaving, if that shaving will only yield him so much per cent. ; neglecting all the higher sources of delight and of power, getting tanned clear through with selfishness, and becoming that meanest thing in this world—a mean man.

Now all this money laid up is, in possibility, a vastly good thing. But for what ? Why, for the power which it has in enabling us to fulfil some good end in life. But suppose we do not put it to any good end at all, or to any end except that of merely adding to its own amount ? Why, then it is of no more value than so many pebbles, and when we add to it we only add to



the heap ; we do not add to ourselves, or to the real wealth of humanity. And that is the essential use of money, or of any other element of power—to add by it to the real wealth of humanity in ourselves and in others. By its aid we must support the body which is the vehicle of the soul, and when we do that, this kind of power is useful. But we must also employ it for the enriching of the inner and spiritual man, and when we fail to do that we neglect its highest uses. And when we save our money at the expense of our souls, then saving money is not economy—it is the worst kind of wastefulness.

Therefore, on the other hand, it follows that whatever educates or disciplines these higher faculties of our being is *not* waste. Whatever enlarges the sphere of thought and peoples it with better conceptions, whatever lifts us above sensual impurities and grinding cares, whatever weans us from contracted and selfish views, has a value which if it does not rise with the price of stocks does not fall with them ; for it is woven into the texture of our immortal being. If the claims of justice and of bodily necessity are satisfied, if there is no real extravagance or dishonesty—then there is a higher economy for a man to practice, and that is the economy of a full and generous manliness, as superior in its expressions to the mere routine of living, as the ointment which Mary poured on the head of Jesus was superior to the money-bag which Judas clutched. I repeat, the economy of a full and generous manliness. Let us consider and cherish this. Let us enrich our souls as we lawfully may with all

beauty, with all truth, and excellence ; for this is the real economy of life.

And let us regard this true economy of life, as also an economy of service and of the highest uses for others. Although you have met all business demands and barred out every bodily necessity, and acquired, it may be, this accumulated power, you are to ask yourself whether by any method you have awakened or nourished the intellectual or moral life of your fellow-men ; whether you have touched by any means the springs of beneficent power in the world—and, in ways which the narrow and the selfish will perhaps call “waste,” have helped those around you, nay, those remote from you it may be, both in time and in space, more truly to live.


Elegance is not always frivolous, beauty is not always worthless, expenditure is not always extravagance. We make a misapplication of the term if in all instances we call these “waste.” Costliness ! why sometimes it is that which gives the best exercise and expression to the soul. It is the only way in which loyalty and love can speak. . The *costliness* of Mary's gift was the very essence of its fitness. The benefit had been great, the sense of gratitude was great, and these were symbolized by the “very precious” ointment. The best elements of our humanity are those which are most unselfish, and there are sentiments to which the ordinary routine of deeds seems inadequate. Therefore they seize upon some token whose very superfluity of costliness shall express the unselfishness of the feeling. Who can sneer at the graceful orna-

ment which affection bestows, by calling it "useless cost?" Who can say that the gift whose rich qualities typify esteem and regard is "extravagant?" Who will declare that the work which the mother curiously embroiders on the garment of a dear child is "frivolous?" Through these speaks a depth of sentiment, and works an unselfish love, which could find no other organ. Their propriety appears in the very *sacrifice* which they indicate. And those only will condemn them who would have censured Mary, and asked, "To what purpose is this waste?"

II. But I proceed to remark that the question which constitutes the text is sometimes asked respecting certain facts of the universe and of human life. And here again we find a misapplication of this word "*waste*." In the system of Divine Providence there are things which sadly perplex us. There is what some may be disposed to call, what the sceptic *does* call, a waste of preparations and of hopes. How many seeds of things there are which never shoot into full development! How many blossoms that fail of fruitage! Nay, in the immensities of space, who knows whether, according to a theory recently much discussed, there are not worlds, and even systems, rolling in their orbits, forever barren and incomplete? And thus, throughout the realms of animal life and of human existence;—what a blighting of hopes, what foreclosing of possibilities, what perishing, as it seems to us, before the time! How many babes that have been nourished in mothers' bosoms; how many chil-

dren that have played like beams of light among the household, who have opened springs of affection that will never cease to flow, and awakened yearnings that cannot be at rest,—have suddenly bowed their heads, and lain like withered buds in the arms of death! What a sense of untimeliness comes over us after the crash of some great catastrophe, when a crowd of human beings has been swept away at one stroke,—as though flesh and blood, and beating hearts, and lofty thoughts, and the warm affinities of human love, were only so many masses of unconscious matter scattered by the elements! We are reconciled, when humanity ripens, to see it decay. When the wheel at the cistern revolves more slowly, when the golden bowl begins to totter in its socket, and one by one the strands of the silver cord untwine, we say—"The time has come. Let the evening shadow fall holy and gentle on the grey hairs, and the venerable form straighten itself for the night's rest of the grave." But this obliterating of all distinctions by the sweep of a relentless law—these fearful statistics of thwarted development! It seems as though the arm of an Almighty Being aiming at his own ends, shattered, uncaring, these crystal vases of our mortality, and—"to what purpose is this waste?"

Doubtless, my brethren, the arm of an Almighty Being *is* busy, and He does aim at His own ends; but not without care for the interests of humanity. In the great plan of God there is no waste—only an economy broader than we can now comprehend. Look around now in the autumn season, and behold the tokens of de-



cay and of perishability. The flowers have vanished the grass loses its sweet breath and fades, the stubble grows rusty in the fields, and the leaves have been falling from the trees, as though nature, getting ready for its sleep, were dropping its beads in prayer. But you know that in all this nothing is *wasted*. You know that not one fibre of grass, not one brown leaf that quivers downward to the ground, nay, not one undeveloped plant, not one fruitless seed of the summer, is utterly lost. It slips into hidden reservoirs of nature. It will come forth in new forms and new uses.

So, had we only a vision clear and broad enough—a vision nearer on a parallel with God's—we should detect no waste anywhere under His direct control. So should we discover these withered human buds, these shattered developments, gathered up in new forms of life and use.

There *is* waste in the world—waste of this dear humanity of ours—but it is not God's waste. I will not stop now to discuss the proposition whether whatever takes place in His world is by His sanction, and therefore is in a sense by Him. I only say there is a sphere of human agency broadly distinguished from the immediate sphere of Divine control. A sphere of human responsibility, where man can promote or hinder if he will. And in that sphere there *is* waste—destruction not to good ends, as in Divine economy, but from selfish motives and to bad ends. There is the waste that comes by *indolence*, the neglect of our powers, the mildew and the rust of our faculties.

There is the waste which is wrought by human *passions*—the havoc of pride, ambition and revenge. Go follow the track of war, with its rills of blood, and its drifts of bones! Go count the slain on the damp red field, when the moon lights up all the shapes of agony, or the rain soaks into the gaping wounds! Go where the hot shot falls like hail, and the batteries tremble with belching flame! Call up the pale faces that wait for the tidings! Look into the homes that no triumphal torches will make brighter! Say, imperial diplomatists, who are now about settling “the balance of Europe,” and are going to set your counters for some new game on your old blood-stained chess-board of politics! will you settle the balance of crushed affections and sore bereavements? Can you piece together broken hearts, and tie up their shattered strings with your “red tape?” In the parchments which you will exchange with your courtesies and champagne, have you estimated the value of desolate homesteads; of bones and sinews made of stuff as good as your own, now bleaching in the ruts of battle-fields? Have you settled that balance of everlasting justice and humanity which God finally holds in His hands, thinking perhaps that your crowns and sceptres in one scale will weigh down the heaps of slaughtered men in the other? forgetting, it may be, the unmoving shadows of widowhood and orphanage that will brood amid the festal lights, and that undertone of a vast sorrow which will mingle with the salvoes of artillery, and the billowy *Te Deums* that shall proclaim that the nations are once more “at peace!”

And man's selfish regards and base appetites also make dreadful waste. Intemperance has made waste—man putting the cup to his neighbor's lips has made waste. Need I gather up the wrecks here to-night? Need I paint the wo? Could I if I would, delineate the waste of drunkenness? The waste of the body, broken and jangling! The waste of hope; the waste of love; the waste of faculty; the waste of the *man*—worse than the dying of a man—I say the *wasting* of a man! On the battle-field he may fall with his powers undishevelled, in the symmetry of his manhood. But this is worse than the dying of the man, is it not, O wives! O mothers!—this burnt-out heart, and capacity of affection turned to loathsomeness? And you who deal in the agents of this wastefulness—who take your money for it, sprinkled with blood and tears—do you not know as to any form of this our common humanity, Christ having shed the light of His love upon it, and baptized it with His blood, that it is not for men to waste?

Is it not, then, soothing, to turn away from all these fields of human wastefulness to that sphere where God is at work directly, even though we fall upon cross-lines of darkness and transactions of mystery? Where God does His work there is no waste. There love by its own hidden processes will secure the ends of love. Humanity, swept and winnowed, trampled down and thwarted, fading and vanishing away, is taken up and borne along in the scope of His great plan who doeth all things well.

III. As suggested by the circumstances of the text, and the train of thought pursued in this discourse, I wish to say a few words, by way of rebuke, concerning that mercenary and calculating notion of religion which virtually implies that anything beyond a sordid obedience and an arbitrary service is so much waste of spiritual power, and to no purpose. Now the very essence of religion is a spontaneous faith and love. How different would have been the character of Mary's act had she performed it as a cold ceremony, or counted the cost? It derives its impressiveness not merely from its fitness, but from the *feeling* which instinctively assumed such an expression. That out-poured ointment was the gushing forth of her reverence and her gratitude.

And it is thus with all genuine excellence. It is thus with the true spirit of religion. That which constrains service or affection, as though anything over-running the letter of requirement and the boundary of external sanctions were a waste, is utterly alien to it. Its life is not in dry ceremonies and forced compliances. It is a glad consent of the will, it is a precipitation of the soul, it is the spontaneous offering of our whole hearts. Its central element is that "perfect love which casts out fear," and which knows nothing of policy and bargain. Good deeds are not the coin which it counts out to purchase heaven; they are inevitable expressions of its very being. Duty is willing service, and prayer is its vital breath. As the sap that circulates in the veins of the flower, as the force that shoots in the crystal, so must the spirit of

religion be in us, a spontaneous life, impelling us upward towards our source, and quickening us to obedience and holiness. As free as the affections which we render to those we love best on earth must be our regard for God and the law of God. What would we say if the child we had tenderly nurtured should grow up making a selfish calculation of our claims upon him, evidently professing regard for us only to obtain further benefits, and performing every duty with measured prudence as though anything more than this were waste? Yet when we carry religion as a yoke, and render it service as a ceremony, is our conduct towards our Heavenly Father any less thankless or mercenary? It is *not* our formal service he requires, but the free surrender of our will. He does not regard the quantity of the ointment, but the fragrance of the heart. And this He calls forth by no arbitrary claim. But He unveils His perfections. He lets all His goodness pass before us. He spreads abroad the loveliness of nature. He pours out the bounties of His daily providence. He concentrates His excellence in the face of Jesus, and displays His love in the spectacle of the cross. And is it not strange if this does not excite in us the spirit of gratitude, and move us to that spontaneous motion and outflowing of love, which is the vital element of true religion? Is it not strange, in the sight of this divine revelation of what God is and what He does for us, if we are formal in our devotion, listless in our prayers, our faith only a cold assent to some creed, and our service a hampered ceremony?

A spontaneous, glad, willing spirit of love and rever-

ence, of trust and devotion—this is the life of all religion, as it is everywhere the life of all noble sentiments, of all worthy action ;—as it constitutes the sacredness of the child's obedience, the glory of the patriot's sacrifice, the inspiration of heroism and labor like that of Paul, not counting the cost.

My hearers, how willingly should we lay hold of any good work, and accept any call to duty, as an opportunity for *expressing* our reverence and gratitude—in the very difficulty of the effort, in the very cost of the performance, rejoicing that we can find the most fitting vehicle for the expression of our sense of that goodness which we can never repay. Who is there does not have this sense of the Divine mercy and bounty? No miracle has been wrought for us as for Mary, and we cannot come to the visible presence of the Saviour to make our costly offering. But our blessings flowing from the constant miracle of God's providence—who can number them? Each knows the experience of his own life. Each knows what calls especially upon him as a record of mercy. But common to all of us are the blessings of the gospel and the Redeemer. If His Divine word has not opened the graves of our dead, it has flooded them with the light of an immortal hope. If it has not called our kindred back to this life, it has revealed them to us among the realities of another. If it still leaves us in mortal conditions of pain, and sorrow, and loss, it comes with all its infinite truth, with all its sanctifying discipline, to guide and strengthen us, to lift us above the world, and to fit us for a peaceful and holy state. And now for all these things what

can we render? My brethren, nothing in the way of discharge or payment. Nothing but a spirit of trust and duty, which, like the fragrance of that ointment, may rise to heaven. Nay, when we shall have passed beyond these earthly limitations, when He by His grace shall bring us still nearer to himself, amid the songs and beatitudes of that more glorious state,—for all we have received, for all we may be, what more can we do than to breathe forth the spontaneous, willing spirit of a love and service akin to hers who, in speechless gratitude, bowed down and poured the costly spikenard on the Saviour's feet!

XVIII.

The Inward Springs.

But the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. JOHN IV, 14.


IN considering the relations of man to the various forms of life with which he is surrounded, there is one thing which at first sight may seem humiliating, but which actually suggests his real rank and his essential difference. I allude to the fact that there are few conspicuous *bodily* peculiarities which distinguish him from the higher animals. A specialty in the hand, and in the foot; some little difference in the provisions by which he walks erect; some minute distinctions in other parts of his organism,—these are about all that entitle man to a separate province among the inhabitants of this world, if we study and regard him merely in his physiological aspects;—distinctions so slight, in fact, that “some naturalists have included him in the monkey tribe, and Linnæus places him in the same general order with the apes and the bats.”

And if in his bodily *aspects* man is thus slightly distinguished, so is he even inferior to the brute in mere

animal qualities—"in swiftness, in eyesight, in delicacy of touch and smell."

Now it seems very evident that this truth, which at the first glance looks derogatory to humanity, viewed in all its suggestiveness, indicates that, for man's proper peculiarity, we are to look upon some other plane of being than the mere animal. It compels us to give due heed to the truism, that each creature excels in that in which it is most excellent. Man is not greatly distinguished in his bodily organism, because *there* is not his great distinction. He is not superior in animal faculties, because in these is not his essential power, nor his highest achievement. Each thing in its own order. The animal is only the basis of the human. But that which is only animal is more completely animal. Man is less completely brute, because the greater energies of his being are taken up and used on a higher level, in the service of more true and noble life.

And this is a conclusion not only of *a priori* reasoning, but of the most common experience. The most stubborn materialist is compelled to acknowledge that what man holds in the way of distinction and supremacy, he holds by virtue of *interior forces*. It is the light of intellect, it is the strength of moral principle, it is boundless spiritual capacity that *characterizes* humanity, and constitutes an impassable chasm between it and the animal kingdom. It is the simple consciousness of these interior forces that makes man recoil from the idea of being confounded in rank or in destiny with the brute. This may be called sheer



pride of human nature—but the pride itself must be accounted for. What is it but the instinctive consciousness of a creature who looks down, and cannot help looking down, from a higher platform of being.

It is *within* that we look for the distinctiveness of man. Our conceptions of humanity become most perplexed; our hopes most faint, **not** in the field of comparative anatomy where the dissecting-knife and the microscope lay bare the material tissues that link us to the animal, and weave us in one web of quivering flesh and blood with all this mass of sensuous being that creeps and climbs, that howls and chatters, and lives and dies—not where we trace the life-roots of our manhood twined with those of brute existence and running down into the swamp of common nature. Not here does our ideal of humanity become most depressed; but where the countenance is almost blank of intellectual beauty, and moral distinctions are poured away in dishevelled impulses, and civilizing affections are submerged in appetites. When the light *within* is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Here, then, we find the dividing line which marks off a special sphere for human life, and indicates its peculiar quality in its inward *springs*. But before proceeding to speak more particularly of these, I must call your attention to the words of Jesus, which, upon the present occasion, will constitute not only the text of my discourse, but its central filament of thought. He says, in reply to the woman of Samaria, "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Regarded

as a mere figure of speech, this is a very wonderful utterance. But it is not a mere figure of speech. It profoundly suggests and defines the sources and operations of man's true life, and the adaptation of the religion of Jesus to his most distinctive needs and capacities, and in this application every word of the passage before us is emphatic.

In considering these distinctive conditions in human life we find three characteristics :

I. Inwardness.

II. Spontaneousness.

III. Durableness.

I. I remark, then, that the springs of man's true and distinctive life are *inward*. For the purpose of unfolding this truth more in detail, I observe, in the first place, that here is the source of all that constitutes *individuality*—individual character. We have already seen how by this peculiarity man is marked off from the animal. In nature there are no generalities—no abstractions, I may say ; everything appears in the concrete, and in the special. Thus, we cannot delineate anything which shall stand for an animal in general, without presenting some specialty belonging to some animal in particular. The best we can do is to depict classes, and present that which marks off one class from another. And the specialty that distinguishes man from the brute is this quality or faculty of an inward life ; the power of building up or unfolding character, or personality—something beyond

the routine of mere class or the bounds of mere instinct.

And as it is with mankind as a whole, so is it with each man. His individuality depends chiefly and essentially upon his inward development—upon the nature and disposition of the forces within him. It appears to be a law running throughout nature, that the higher the development the more special are the results. The lower things are in the scale of being the closer is their likeness one to the other. Get down among the animalculæ, and there is hardly any organization at all. And so we may say that the lower a man is the more unorganized he is. Sometimes, though clothed more gorgeously than Solomon, he is little more than a mass of animality. He lies flat upon the surface of life like a sponge. But the more his being becomes organized the more specialties it puts forth, the more individual traits he exhibits. And each of these is the product of some inward impulse. He is known not only by bodily features, or the shape he has taken from the pressure of conditions round about him, but by points of mind and soul. And so the law proceeds. The higher the inward development the higher the individuality; and the loftiest attainment in a human life appears in the most special character and the most special work. The more individualities, the more of God's glory in humanity,—the more diversified the forms in which men show their love to Him, and set forth the marvellous aptitudes of the spirit with which He has endowed them:—and yet, not the wider *separation*, but the profounder *unity*. The

grander the music that sweeps over many chords to melt in one vast harmony, the more complete the radiant fulness of the spiritual firmament in which one star differs from another star, but all in glory. The more perfect the Divine whole because of the special differences—the moss-tuft below, the Pleiades on high; the descending snow-flake and the rolling globe; each unfolding from an inward law of being, but only man from a *conscious* inwardness.

But I observe further, that here is the spring not only of that individuality by which a man becomes best known to *others*, but of that consciousness in which he becomes best known to *himself*. Here is his most vivid certainty of being and of the great realities of being. For there is no assurance more authentic than that by which man apprehends these primal facts. If a man's intuitions deceive him, if his moral sense deceives him, how does he know that his physical eyesight does not deceive him? Nay, it is a curious fact that one of the results of accurate investigation is a rectifying of the deceptions of our physical vision. By examining nature we find out that things are not as they appear. And the faculty by which we convince ourselves of any veracity in the reports of our senses is an inward faculty. And if we rely upon this in its report of that which comes through the senses, shall we not rely upon it when it reports that which comes more immediately to itself? And if by the decisions of the *mind* we accept the facts of an external world, shall we not by its decisions also accept the existence of spiritual realities?

If the reports of this inward witness are not veracious, what reports *are* veracious? If man does not know the lines of eternal rectitude, if he sees no real distinction between right and wrong by the help of conscience, then what does he know or perceive? If the soul turned towards the Infinite, in its quivering awe, in its joyful dependence, does not discern God, what power in all our complex being have we, and what objects *are* real? At least, if any truth is possible to man here, within, that truth verily is. Amid all the drifting cloud-rack of phenomena shoots up this spinal fact of consciousness with its perceptions and its experiences, and this one element of verity stands for every man—that whatever else may be or may not be, he himself exists. Here is the fountain of all vision literally as well as spiritually. Things are to him according to what he is in himself. The world he perceives without is colored and stamped by this conscious life-world within:—dark to thee if thy soul is dark; flat and dead if thou thyself art sensual; beautiful, transparent, revealing interior splendors if only he who looks mirrors in his own spirit the brightness of the Divine Presence, and has a vision clear and serene. Men sometimes underrate abstract processes of thought. “What is the worth,” they ask, “of all these metaphysical niceties and refined distinctions? Give us something tangible; give us the substantial fact which we can see and grasp.” “Nothing,” they tell us, “has been gained by these subtle evolutions of thought for four thousand years. On the other hand, look at the victories of natural science, extend-

ing its conquests into every domain of matter, and harnessing its forces to the conveniences of our everyday life." But are not these accumulated facts themselves trophies of thought? And do not these physical discoveries in their significance and their relations depend upon ideas?

And surely that only is true life to any man which actually is to him in his own inward conviction. Be the reports of his senses, his reason, his conscience, true or false, here in this reservoir of consciousness is the *reality* of all his joys and sorrows. Here is the staple of that mystic chain that links him to being, and thrills with magnetic sympathies. Here is that which to him is alone right and true, and which, O man, you should guard with all the vigilant sanctities of conscience, with all the affections of the heart; nor surrender it to any pressure from without, nor any suggestion from within, nor to the allurements of life, nor to the terrors of death; but hold it as a sacred trust from God, and as that in which essentially you *do* live.

Moreover, within is the spring of all radical and effective *reformation*. Inspirations, affections, desires, —these, and not external or conventional restrictions, make up the moral substance of a man. What is he worth who has only fenced himself in from sin, and stands leaning with his heart clear over and his body half way? A morality that is merely patched on, a virtue that is poised upon arithmetical calculations of policy, what is that good for? What spiritual benefit in lopping away one or two bad habits, while

the original virus remains in the constitution. One may lop away *all* bad habits, and yet, having no positive spiritual life, he is only like an old stump with the branches broken off. "Make the tree good and his fruit good"—*that* is the premiss of all genuine reformation. Vitalize the heart, and that will light up the brain and glorify the life. Make goodness an object of passion cherished by the whole soul within, not an object of calculation estimated by the mind's eye from without, and then a man will *live* in goodness; he will breathe it as he does heaven's air, not adopt it on the principle with which he takes stock.

And defective, inefficient, doomed to sad disappointment, must be all schemes for rectifying society by any external apparatus. Allowing due margin for the influence of outward conditions, we must leave a large scope for the play of internal forces. Republican or democratic institutions will not make republican or democratic men. Revolution does not insure progress. You may overturn thrones, but what proof that anything better will grow upon the soil? The deepest woes of humanity are not cured by universal fraternity and soup-kitchens. The social millennium is not based on barricades.

And here also is indicated one of the methods by which Providence acts upon human history. That Providence *does* act upon human history who can doubt? or, if he doubts, then who dare hope? There are times when there is nothing else to fall back upon but the final purpose and the divine power;—times when, for the moment, all the triumphant tendencies

seem downward—a wild swirl of base ambitions and godless policies, swamping all the lines of moral rectitude, of warning experience and of common sense. Then, indeed, is it beautiful to see how God manages the chaos of human perversities; to see the visible working of the mandate—"Let there be light;" and to notice from what unexpected quarters the light breaks. And how often is it that God brings light and order out of this chaos by touching the inward springs! How often by filling the heart, by inspiring the thought of some man, whose hand carries the golden thread of the Divine purpose, and whose dauntless conviction, meeting the emergencies of the hour, precipitates the long-hidden result. So that, under God, the fruition of human good ripens in the recesses of great, true souls.

We see, then, the significance of the Saviour's declaration, that His great work is *in* man. "*In* him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Not by institutions, not by forms, did Jesus seek to redeem the individual, or the race, but by the Spirit of Life, moving among the inward springs.

II. But, in the second place, I observe that the springs of true and distinctive life are characterized by *spontaneousness*. The Saviour represents the spirit and power of His work as not only a well of water *in* us, but "*springing* up into everlasting life." And this method accords with the most effective processes, with the greatest and best results in human action. It is not by inward force solely that man is marked off

from the animal classes. The animal moves by instincts and affections, and displays the working of a power, more or less conscious, within. It is by change of routine, by altered tendencies and higher planes of action, that man is distinguished. The animal of to-day is the animal of ages ago, moving in a fixed and limited orbit. Man alone turns short about in his habit and alters his direction. Man alone evinces spiritual *growth*. The dullest lump of human clay is not a mere float on the current of nature. The coarsest drudge is not a mere driving-wheel or steam-engine. There is more than one plane to his life. There are inspirations behind his work. At least in him there are majestic and indefinable possibilities. He can do more than one thing at a time. He not only works, but thinks. He not only makes, he creates. Who goes forth to his daily task without an ideal above his work? Who can tell the inspirations that flow up and down yonder street, an ascending and descending gulf-stream of duty, affection and hope? Who knows what resolution even now is quickening in the outcast's bosom, that shall turn away his life of shame, that shall purify the moral leper and give him a *new* life? Who sees where a noble endeavor cancels a sordid aim, and heroic devotion tramples selfishness into the dust? And yet men do these things. Men hold this capacity, this possibility of ideal inspirations, this power, under Divine help, of throwing off old life and putting on new. Something is here far grander than instinct—wider, boundlessly wider, than the limitations of animal life.

And how often this new life is impelled by a single thought! How often a new affection makes a new man! The sordid, cowering soul turns heroic. The frivolous girl becomes the steadfast martyr of patience and ministration, transfigured by deathless love. The career of bounding impulses turns into an anthem of sacred deeds. Saul the Pharisee is changed into Paul the Apostle. And that which makes this new life is often like that which made a Paul of Saul. Not coming in that manifest brightness, but with that method—coming *spontaneously*, we know not how or whence. The greatest things in human life, the best things—do they not always come in that way? Thought itself, if you go back to its dim, mysterious starting-point, what *is* it but an inspiration?—at least, what but this is anything above routine thought—anything like creative and uplifting thought?

And here is the characteristic of all true human progress. It is not mere motion forward, but upward. It is not simply a march, but an upheaval. Is not this especially the distinctive method of religion? Does it not go against the grain of habits, of inclinations? It is a mistake to lay down the unqualified proposition that all religions are cast in the mould of mental and moral preconceptions—so that if you know what a man's nationality is, what his education is, what the shape of his skull and the bulk of his brain, you can predicate his religion. You may trace some outlines in this way. But what is most characteristic in true religion, what is most wonderful, is the fact that it wells up right against a man's desires, his inclinations,

his preconceptions. It shatters his old mouldy crust of habits ; it changes the currents of his thought ; it makes his dumb, stupified conscience speak right out, and speak to the purpose ; it transfigures, it regenerates him. If it cannot make a small power large, it makes it good. If it cannot give a big brain in the place of a contracted one, it transmutes a man's intellect all into a divine essence of purity and love ; or freights it with the thunder and lightning of dauntless and effective energy.

Christ did not supersede God's laws in human nature, He worked in accordance with them. But I think He struck upon this capacity in man, of being changed and uplifted by a spring of spontaneous affection and thought, when He describes the results of His spirit and His truth, as "*springing up into everlasting life.*" We know what results He did produce in humanity. We know the great change that took place in the souls and the lives of His immediate followers. We know how John and James became fishers of men. We know what Peter was impelled to see and feel. We know with what silent, inner force, and yet for what a stupendous revolution, Christianity went abroad in the world. We know how in individuals and in communities, in solitary hearts and in human history, touching upon this spontaneous inward power, it was "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

III. Once more I remark, that man's true and distinctive life is characterized by *durableness*. "A well

of water springing up into *everlasting* life." Yes, that is the wonderful endowment of this inward nature of ours. It has the capacity of an enduring, of an endless life. And we need something that will cause us to realize this durability. Now, it is not necessary that I should present here the arguments for human immortality—so common, and yet so cogent from the very fact that they *are* common. Some there are who may tell us that "this pleasing hope, this fond desire," constitute the only basis of the dogma. "Man longs for immortality," they may say, "and therefore believes it. 'The wish is father to the thought.'" But this does not explain whence the hope and the desire themselves spring. It does not explain how such a grand and pregnant instinct should be the only instinct that has no real object, and will meet with no gratification. I shall not occupy time in refuting the fiction of annihilation—for no such fact exists. Not a straggling film, not a quivering atom in this wealthy universe, ever perishes. Year by year in this human frame there is not the same matter, but there *is* the same individuality, the same personality, the same man. Yet not a flake of this perpetually circulating matter dies. Does, then, this personal essence, this primal fount of thought and consciousness, ever die? Flowers may wither in the bud—they have no consciousness, no desire, no limitless capacity. But intellect folded in the bud—does *that* absolutely perish?

"So sinks the day-star in the ocean's bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky."

But the starry light of intellect—does *that* go out in darkness? The orb of thought and genius—does *that* rise nevermore? The good man's life, outrunning all selfish aspiration to be a balm and blessing in the world; to be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, a help to those who are ready to perish, and to make the widow's heart sing for joy—is the universe so populous that all that is cancelled from the roll of being? The bud withers; but no kindred bud takes its withering to heart, or yearns for its renewal. But the bud that drops from a mother's bosom, overshadowed by the petals of her yearning love—tell us not that *that* has no renewal; no blossoming in more genial air;—for then you mock a deathless instinct; then you would balk an inward spring that flows like the love of God Himself. But these common arguments for immortality need no elaboration. Let any man feel the ripple of his own instincts—let him listen to the depths of his own consciousness and hear the murmurs of the sea of everlasting being. I simply point to this as a distinctive characteristic of humanity. The inward springs of man's being are *durable*.


And in the consciousness of that durability are the sources of his noblest achievements. I speak not of a mercenary regard to this truth, but allude to the fact that it appears as an unquenchable inspiration in his worthiest efforts. That which is eternal in him aids him in his loyalty to the eternal and immutable morality. That which is to triumph over all time and change, helps him to bear up in calamity and disappointment. His assurance of an enduring end ena-

bles him with clearer vision to read off the conditions of the present world as a system of means. Especially in this thought of an imperishable quality in our humanity is he quickened to spiritual effort and to higher aims. Therefore it is a most momentous result for him to *feel* these inward springs, to *realize* the durability of his true life.

For, my brethren, all possession implies duty. The higher the rank the higher the obligation. And this chiefly is why we should be solicitous in dwelling upon the truth of human immortality. Not taking it up merely as a comfort,—but receiving it as an injunction, if we really are more than the brute. not to live merely as the brute; if we are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, not to bury our talent in the earth, or live only by the standards of this world.

Now these are old thoughts, but how little are they realized in action; old thoughts, but how fresh and impressive do they become whenever we contemplate the immense fact of our enduring nature.

Now it is the effect of Christ's truth and spirit working within us to make this consciousness fresh and real. He appeals to this consciousness in the simple announcement of the truth of immortality. He makes firm and definite that which humanity yearns for and instinctively believes in, and which nothing but the revelation of this truth can satisfy. But Christ does more than give us the mere doctrine—the mere statement of immortality. He gives us the *substance* of immortality. As I said in the commencement, every word of the text is emphatic. The truth and spirit of Jesus



in the soul of man becomes "a well of water springing up into everlasting *life*." Man possesses enduring capacities and longings for immortality. Christ furnishes these capacities and desires with immortal aliment. He wakens these spiritual faculties, often vague and dormant, to vigor and execution. For we must remember that immortal life is not merely *duration* of existence; it is fullness of *being*. It is the employment of our largest and noblest faculties. And to these, I repeat, Jesus gives food and employment. In other words, He gives *life*. He gives us God to love, duty to do, His own Spirit for communion, His own ideal for aspiration. He causes us to possess and to realize eternal life *now*, not to regard it as merely a gift hereafter. In the consciousness which he kindles within us, we learn by experience that "*this* is eternal life, to know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." Could the external aspects of men become transfigured by the spiritual reality that is within them, and of which they are a part, what a change would take place in all this time scenery, and how would that which seems so solid and enduring, so worthy of our most intense effort and our chief regard, fall away as the mere scaffolding of the real life that works in and through it. Take man merely in his material conditions—take up the telescope and survey the physical universe in which he is placed—and what is he when the world itself in which he plants so many hopes and cares dwindles to an atom? But look with that inward eye which lies behind the eye of sense, even upon the humblest and the most degraded man, and

how does all outward nature grow dim in the contrast of that spiritual revelation. Turn the lens of faith upon the relations, the affections, the mystic lights and shadows of a single home, and we begin to estimate what humanity is in the worth and capacity of its inward springs. All this we may talk about and profess to believe—it is only the experience of Christ's spirit within us that makes it *real* to us. He who in that spirit does the work of duty, feels that he is linked with immortal sanctities and belongs to the imperishable conditions of a moral world. He who communes with God knows his essential relationship to God. He who moves impelled by these inward springs which flow from out the depths of the spiritual world, is assured not only that he is an heir of eternal life, but a partaker of it now. And in this assurance how patiently, how gloriously have men been inspired to do and to suffer. To them immortality has been not a distant reward or mere consolation in the future, but a present heritage and an intrinsic joy. In the world's many conflicts that has afforded them inward peace. In fiery persecutions that has cooled all torments. Strengthened with this might in the inner man they have faced all consequences. And when earth has grown all dark and lonely, this has given them a heaven in the love of God.

Christ touching these inward springs thus enables us to do and to be—thus gives us clear faith to see eternal things, and a vital consciousness to know them as they are. And now, considering how all man's true and distinctive life is *within*; how it is moved and

characterized by *spontaneous* power ; how, enduring in its nature, it needs not only the *assurance* but the *experience* of immortality, we may conceive—nay, my hearers, God grant that we may know by the testimony of our own souls !—how, amid our thirsty ambitions, our feverish hopes, and the desert of this arid worldliness, the spirit and truth of Jesus is “ in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

XIX.

Loneliness.

And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

JOHN XVI, 32.

THE passage which contains these words seems to convey that alternation or interchange of emotions with which the spirit of the Saviour was moved on the eve of His crucifixion. At one moment we behold Him wrestling in the garden, and with sweat falling from Him as it were drops of blood, praying that the cup might pass from Him; and at another, with serene submission we hear Him say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" There is a crisis of awful agony upon the cross, when a shadow falls even upon *His* consciousness of the Divine presence, and through the darkness of that ninth hour thrills the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the burst of anguish is swallowed up in the peace and victory of those final words,—*"Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit!"* And so in the verse before us, I repeat, there appears the same alternation of feeling. Those

full sympathies, those exquisite sensibilities, for a moment we may believe, shrunk at the thought of the abandonment of that coming hour—of the desertion of friends and disciples ; leaving their master uncheered by human support, to meet the trial, the insult, and the pain. But the shrinking was only for a moment, as that calm sense of the Divine presence flowed into His soul, and rose up to meet the issue. "Behold," said He, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone : and yet," He adds, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

My hearers, though it is true that God was with Christ in the *special* sense, and that His was a special experience ; still in these words there is significance for us all, in many of our earthly conditions not separated from the Saviour in his trials, and often called upon to abide in the shadow of loneliness ; each of us often needing to recall the same consolation, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." That at times we must experience this sense of loneliness, and do need this consolation, is the truth which I propose to illustrate in the present discourse.

And, in the first place, let me say that there are seasons when the thought comes upon us with peculiar force, that each of us is *essentially* alone—alone, I mean, *as an* individual being, as a spiritual unit in the universe of God. It is a striking fact, though it is such an obvious one, that each of us has an integral personality which cannot be invaded by any other. Each has his own life to live, his own thoughts to

think, his own work to do, his own destiny to fulfil. And, certainly, this is a very profitable fact for us to reflect upon, especially in an age like this when there are so many influences drawing man away from the centre of his own soul into the whirl of outside realities. The great interests of the time are involved with external facts and achievements. Men are busy studying the phenomena, and detecting the uses, of the material world. The seals of nature are broken, and her most subtile secrets extorted. The earth gives up its ancient treasures—the electric force works in harness—and from the watch-towers of science, man, pushing his out-look beyond the horizon of his own world, pierces ever deeper into the unfathomed recesses of space. The idea also of humanity as a consolidated whole, the theories and enterprises of social advancement—the movement of great masses—the glitter of perpetual excitement; these things, so characteristic of our days, are not in all points favorable to that personal consciousness, that inward reference and solicitude, which have marked other men and other times. Of course either extreme is unhealthy; and there are occasions when, more than anything else, one needs to turn from mental solitude to the relations and activities of life. But, with all this, it is essential that we should realize our individuality, and know those limits within which we stand isolated and alone—that interior circle of our own spiritual substance and possession, our own responsibility, our own prior and original relation to God. And the very terms in which I now state this fact, show how different this sense of

personality is from mere egotism, or selfishness. Selfishness does not arise from a deep knowledge of self, but from ignorance of our own nature and position. The selfish man is intensely conscious of the relations of others to himself. He *consorts* with them and uses them for his own ends; and in *this* way, indeed, he *may* be said to make an intense self-reference. He pours out his selfishness upon all things, and colors and warps all things by it. But he fails to ask, *What* this self is that spreads out so largely, and claims so much? What are its *obligations* as well as its *demands*? What is it bound to *do* to others as well as to *receive*? When we cultivate our own self-consciousness enough to really know our *rights*, we shall in the same act of perception recognize our *duties*; and the more definite the outlines of our special personality, the more palpable the reciprocal network which connects us with those without. Indeed, if one wishes to *unlearn* selfishness, I should say, let him go apart and stand alone by himself. It is in crowds, in the eager rush and rivalry of the market and the street, that one grows more intensely selfish. Let the man who has lived unjustly or imperiously towards others; reckless of their welfare, or extorting their service; let him go apart into the solitude of still woods or mountains, or wherever there comes upon him the sense of vastness and silent depth in nature. Let him look out from his window in the great city, when the long arteries of the streets throb with slackened motion, and the places of his daily toil and interest dwindle into shadow, while the immensity of midnight glitters wide

over all ; or let him in the stillness of his own chamber grow conscious of his own soul, as all the realities of business or pleasure ebb away and leave him only with that ;—I say, let any man whose life is but a game for his own passions, or a mart for his shrewd trade, pass into solitary conditions like these, and their suggestions will teach him a better lesson. They will teach him that he cannot live by himself or for himself alone, and that he clings by innumerable dependencies to others ; that this broad system of things is not to be interpreted by the designs of a few ; and that there is nothing so dislocated and presumptuous as a selfish soul.

I repeat, then, it is well for a man to become self-conscious, to become intensely aware of his individuality and of his essential solitariness in the universe. But on the other hand, this consciousness is not without its liabilities and its need—its need of the very consideration presented in the text, “I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

Sometimes this consciousness of individuality may appear in *intellectual* excess. A man may reason himself into the conception that his own mind is one and the same in his fellow-men, and is the solitary intelligence in the universe. Either he may think that he is the only designer and inventor in this entire sphere of being, and that this entire array of forms and forces is merely the product of blind necessities, and that outside this region of matter there is nothing ; or he may conclude that he is a portion and expression of the indivisible essence, the pantheistic spirit that fills,

sustains and evolves the great whole of things. He may fall into the notion that God first becomes conscious in man ; or that Deity is but the colossal spectre, a projected image on the screen of the universe, of the ideals and the possibilities of humanity. He may come to think that it is only the unity of his own life that works in the thoughts of men and unrolls through the epochs of history ; that it is only the motion of his own intelligence that grows in plants, and flows in seas, and shivers in clustering constellations.

Now, to this proud solitariness of the intellect, to this awful self-idolatry generated from the cold mists of scientific speculation, or from the subjective conceits of the soul, it needs that there should come the great fact that the human spirit is *not* alone ; that it lives and moves and has its being by an Infinite Spirit, to the independence of which, to the illimitability of which, man's own self-consciousness bears witness. His own moral nature, his own free-will, is evidence of a moral intelligence and will above and behind the material universe ; and his own consciousness of limitation and defect is an intuitive recognition of that unbounded and perfect One who alone is the Origin, the Life, the Controller, of all. Thus even reason rebukes this intellectual conceit of loneliness, and responds to the affirmation of the text. How much more does the moral nature of man, in this startling suggestion of spiritual solitude, cry out for the Father ! That which proud Atheistic philosophy in its *strength* cannot maintain, this in its *weakness* recoils from. Among these immensities of being, these untiring, fatal wheels, it

rejoices in the consciousness, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

Again, this sense of personal loneliness may run into excess in the feeling of individual *conscience*—in the conception of private responsibility. This may not be a very common form of error in our day, for reasons which I have already given existing in the influences of the age. As I have already remarked, we are more liable to be drawn away from this consciousness of our own souls and of personal obligation by the immense externality of the interests abounding in our time. But there is such a fact as morbid self-consciousness, perplexing us with too exclusive introspection. A man may feel not only that he has much to do, but as though all the ability to do it was to come from his own resources. The calls of duty, the sense of deficiency, the front of thick coming trials, may seem too much for him, so that he is overshadowed with a lonely despair. He finds himself, as it were, endeavoring to lift his own weight, and to generate new power in the exhausted reservoirs of his own soul. He feels the need of moral effort, but with every effort he makes he sinks still deeper, and thus keeps sharpening the stings of self-reproach. But when thus tormented with this spiritual casuistry, troubled by these fears and fightings within, how blessed is the thought—"I am not alone, for the Father is with me!" To meet the trials and to achieve the work of life, two agencies must be employed. We need not only the power of effort, but the help of prayer—we need not only the prompting of our duty, but an infusion from God, and in our

faithful though incomplete endeavor, may look away from our own short-comings to His considerate mercy.

Moreover, this sense of personal loneliness must spring up in the souls of those who in their guilt and their shame feel themselves outcast and abandoned among their fellow-men. Oppressive and dreary indeed must be the solitude of such a being, causing him to realize the essential loneliness of man by the stopping of those channels of intercourse which have linked him to others. The world generally, perhaps justly, perhaps unduly, has condemned him and is suspicious of him. He dare not trust to the charity of nobler natures which would act for him, and he finds that in proportion as men are bad and mean themselves, their censoriousness is intensified. Worse than all the rest, he is conscious of his own vileness. If there is a desert around him, lowering with gloom and covered with desolation, on whose rank ground no green thing grows, and through whose heaps of drifted bones the bleak wind sighs, while the lights of social privilege glimmer far off; he feels that he himself has made that desert—that out of the waste of his own life have spread abroad this desertion and scorn. An yet even above him is there not a clear, blue heaven? Does not the common light visit him, and the soft air wrap him about, by expressions of outward beneficence, telling him that he is not utterly alone, because the Father is with him? Do no faded lines of memory come out in his mind, that earlier influences engraved there, and which bear record of a nearer mercy than nature can dis-

close ;—scraps of words spoken to the penitent thief or the weeping Magdalene ; recollections of that tender story of the Prodigal, who from among the husks and the swine groped his way back, and found himself in the open arms of his father ? Oh ! the first point of restoration, without which the guilty soul would be desolate indeed, is such a thought of God as this. To feel utterly alone even in the deepest guilt, is an excess of self-consciousness. Son of crime, stained all over with hideous proofs of sin ! Daughter of shame, in the deepest degradation of your discrowned womanhood ! there is warrant in the gospel to say even to thee, to thee under the heaviest ban of social exclusion, under the thickest folds of vice and scales of moral leprosy, “ thou art not alone, because the Father is with thee.”

We see, then, how the consolation of the text is fitted to those who, upon any occasion, feel their essential loneliness as individuals, as personal units in the world. But in the next place I proceed to say, that there are occasions when, without any special self-reference, men feel themselves alone, and, therefore, need this consolation.

For instance, there is the loneliness which, at times, will be felt by him who is loyal to *principle*. It is not only true that a man must form his own convictions for himself, but if they are worthy of being called “ *convictions*,” he must stand by them and maintain them for himself. And it is not yet so late in the day that one, if he is thus devoted to principle, may not find himself deserted by the popular tide, misinterpreted by friends as well as by foes, and as to any strength or

ing sympathy, left alone. Indeed, I hardly think that the conditions of following Jesus, the conditions of following righteousness and truth, are only obsolete possibilities. I can conceive that there may be cases, even now, when in faithfulness to this discipleship a man must leave father and mother, and houses and lands. Nay, let one take up a single virtue, a single grace of Christianity, and try to carry it straight through every temptation and over every hindrance, and see how often it would be like the carrying of a cross. Take truth in speech, or sincerity of heart in action, and cling to it through the maze of traffic and of compliment, through all the conventionalisms and frowns and favors of the world. Take a profession of Christianity that bases itself upon the life of faith rather than of sight, and hold it consistently, feeding it from inner fountains in the soul, through thick allurements and daily cares. Take meekness, purity, charity, moral courage, and hold to these everywhere, upon all occasions, and see how often this must be a lonely effort, throwing you back upon the poise of your own soul, and leaving you this single but all-sufficient consolation—"I am not alone, because the Father is with me."


But what a great thing it is thus to stand alone, having this consolation! Is there any posture which man can assume, so grand and impressive as when he sinks back upon his convictions of duty and leans upon God? "Here stand I," said Luther; "I *cannot* otherwise; God help me!" Surrounded there by the power and the pomp of the world, he seemed to be

alone. But emperors, princes, priests, dignitaries, were not so powerful as the solitary monk, for, fresh from the struggle and assurance of earnest prayer, he knew that he was not alone because the Father was with him.

But without such a conviction as this in the day of trial, how sad, how hopeless is the human heart. Then there is no stability, no true moral courage. Then a man may be a schemer, a shuffler, a trimmer, a piece of human goods marketable and having a price. But he cannot have that strength and persistence which consists only with the conviction of the right, and of God's help that is always with the right.

Once more I observe, that in the profoundest *experiences* of life we must be alone. There are occasions in which *however* intensely our friends may feel for us they cannot feel in our stead, and we must strive or endure in our solitary individuality. The very deepest realities of our being are those with which no stranger and no friend can intermeddle. They are memories, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, which have passed into our souls and become parts of ourselves.

As we look out upon the crowded streets, it is affecting to think how each man in that mingled mass is working out and must work out the problem of life alone; working it out for good or for evil; working it out in results that leave their deposits in the strata of his substantial being. Is not the most humble, nay, the most despised man, interesting to you, when you regard him as a moral agent working out a spiritual destiny?—when you think of the sins, and joys, and



griefs, that constitute the warp and woof of his inmost personality? These are the exclusive and peculiar experiences of life; but there are experiences common to us all in which men likewise find themselves alone.

There is the time of sickness, when in weakness and pain one must lie through long sleepless nights; when the dearest friend has sunk in weariness, and the eyes of the watcher are heavy; when the dreams of fever have melted away, leaving the mind with an intense realization of solitude; when there is a strange stillness in the house, and the surges of sound have died away in the streets, and the night-shadows scarcely broken by the dim light weave a sombre embroidery on the wall, and the tick of the clock echoes as it were in eternity. Then, when all the links that bind us to others are loosened and still, and the soul feels the frailty of the tabernacle in which it abides; then, in that intense spiritual consciousness, how blessed is the thought—"In my weakness and my solitude I am borne up in the arms of Infinite Love. Through the silence and shadow of the night-watches they support me, and will not faint or grow weary, but I may rest assured of that Divine protection and ready help. I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

And there is the loneliness of *bereavement*. Though many may share it with us; though the flow of sympathy may be rich and full, nevertheless under that stroke each heart must feel its own bitterness. The father cannot mourn as the mother mourns. She has felt even a nearer and more mysterious relationship to

the departed child whose gentle pressure lies still warm upon her heart. And the sympathy of friends cannot be as our own grief—it cannot enter into the most intimate recesses, or take hold of the deep substance of our sorrow. It ought not to be so ; for each, having his own trials, must in some degree have his limitation in sharing the trials of others. Nor does a keen bereavement ever entirely lose its sharpness. The shadow never completely passes away. We are so much the lonelier for the absence of those who have vanished from our side as we walk the earth. And though our sense of spiritual nearness and reunion may habitually be vivid and strong as time passes on, and the ranks of those who have lived with us and loved us grow thinner and thinner, a mournful consciousness of solitude will take possession of us. And then it is that we need the assurance of Christian trust and faith, that we are not alone, because the Father is with us and with them ; and that we and they live in the same Presence and are gathered up in the same mercy.

There is still another experience concerning which, with more emphasis than of all the rest, we can say that it must be endured alone. We must *die* alone. There is a moment in which no kindly wish, no outstretched hand, can enter into the world of our consciousness from which all earthly perceptions are fading away. To the very verge of the stream our friends may accompany us, they may bend over us, they may cling to us there ; but that one long wave from the sea of eternity washes up to the lips, sweeps us

from the shore, and we go forth alone! In that untried and utter solitude, then, what can there be for us but the pulsation of that assurance—"I am not alone, because the Father is with me!"

Having thus considered these conditions and experiences of human life, which however common can never lose their interest, and must one day be real for us, permit me, in conclusion, to ask—nay, rather let each one put the practical, searching question to himself—"Am I ready to be *alone*?" And "Can I in those moments of solitary consciousness look up, in the full conviction expressed in the words of the text?"

And let us be thankful for the life and example of him who, passing through the conditions and experiences of our common humanity, must needs pass under the shadow of loneliness, and who, as we partake of His spirit, enables us to partake of his consciousness and thus to say—"I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

XX.

Overcoming the World.

But be of good cheer · I have overcome the world. JOHN XVI, 33.

THE most difficult problem presented to the human mind—the problem of evil—will probably never be solved by the human intellect in its present conditions. But in all the discussion that grows out of it, one point is generally conceded. It is acknowledged that evil has its *uses*. Whatever be the true theory of its origin; whether it be considered as an element ordained of God, or whether it exists as a necessity in things, it is so adjusted to the present system of the world, or the present system of the world is so adjusted to it, that the noblest results which man achieves are achieved in contact with it. Without indulging in speculations upon what humanity *might* be, but taking humanity as it *is*, it is evident that a world of unbroken harmony would be a world of perpetual inactivity. There would be nothing prompting man to endeavor. There would be no intellectual and moral growth—no original personality. These presuppose effort and resistance. Desire springs up in

limitation. Work is the process of an uncompleted ideal. Temptation is the furnace where mere innocence is refined into virtue. In short, in one way or another, evil wakes up all our faculties to positive development, and furnishes the occasions for human history.

Let our speculations, then, upon the problem of evil be as vexatious or as ingenious as they may, the simple fact being this—that our most enduring good comes from its provocation, and that this is the only conceivable way of achieving that good—it is well that man is placed in no sphere of ease and rest, but in a world where all he gains must be gained by effort; where his chief blessedness ensues from vanquishing the obstacles to that blessedness. Evidently, he has been set in the world to overcome the world; and in this conflict and this victory he unfolds the grandest features of his humanity.

For instance, the long process of *material* civilization—what is that but overcoming the world? Oh, what inspiration and grandeur in the development of that process! Survey the world not as an end in itself, but as an *instrument*—view it as the agent in a grand scheme—and the wisdom and benevolence of God are as manifest in what may be called its “deficiencies” and “imperfections,” as in its appointments. Are there any who wonder why the world was not made a garden, strewn with gratifications for every want, and bathed in perpetual summer? Do they wander back to some “golden age,” whose mellow light retreats as *they* recede; always hovering in the

dim horizon of the past—never falling within the circumference of the present? an age when the earth yielded its fruits without the cost of sweat or tears, and perpetual bliss lingered within its sphere; when beauty knew no decay, and health bloomed to the last, and death came as a visible transfiguration? But with such a condition the noblest possibilities of our humanity could not coincide. The golden age is not in the past, but in the future; not in the origin of human experience, but in its consummate flower; not opening in Eden, but out from Gethsemane. Is not the goodness of God as manifest in what the earth does *not* spontaneously produce, as in those things which are furnished immediately to our hands? Are not the morning want and the noontide weariness, yes, even poverty, nakedness, and hunger, the springs of incalculable blessings? How has the Infinite Father manifested His glory by sending man, not to repose upon the bosom of nature, but to conquer its obstacles and beat down its limitations. The earth was glorious “when the morning stars sang together” over it; glorious in its uncultivated luxuriance, dripping with primeval dew. But how much more glorious in its latent capabilities, in that which it did not yield spontaneously, but which it was to surrender to human effort—the riches hidden in the grain of the oak, and the bowels of the rock! The difference between the aboriginal world and the world civilized—between the wildness of nature and the magnificent city, the power of mechanism, the splendor of art, the telegraph, the printing-press, the steam-engine, the dome of

justice, the cathedral's spire—illustrates the inspiration born of want and endeavor. Or, for a single symbol of man's victory over the material world, take the *ship* which rides the seas and circumnavigates the globe. Consider the naked savage, weaponless, limited, challenged by all the elements, and then look at this mysterious vehicle of flame and iron, with the light of changing constellations flickering on its sails, and all the climates painted on its hull.

Or take the conquests of man in the *intellectual* world. See how all the glory of his achievement in this sphere springs from the incitement of limitation and difficulty. In the domains of matter and of mind knowledge is shut up as in a sealed book. Every great fact is torn open with effort, and truth unfolds itself leaf by leaf. In painful meditation men feel the quickening of a new thought. Only to the eyes of the midnight watcher does the starry plenitude open a grander series. Limitation and difficulty meet us in all our researches. Yet these are the *provocatives* of research and the prophecies of something greater to be known. "When I arrive at a difficulty that seems insurmountable," said a certain philosopher, "I always feel that I am on the eve of a great discovery." Thus has man been inspired to intellectual conquest, and in far-extended fields of knowledge he plants the signals of his success.

Man's grandest work, then, is overcoming the world, and the struggle by which he achieves this work is rendered possible only by the pressure of antagonistic forces. We cannot conceive of any such victory in a


system of things where all our material wants should be spontaneously gratified, and where all truth lay upon the surface.

But now I proceed to ask, is there not a more solemn and arduous conflict for man than any that he finds in the material world about him, or in the realm of intellectual effort? And let the origin or the purpose of evil be what it may, does it not, in the conflict to which I now allude, constitute the very condition of his victory? At least, here is the *practical* interpretation of the problem. You have been perplexing yourself, and perplexing others, it may be, with this question of "evil," wondering why it should be here to mar the harmonies of God's universe. And you may do as thousands before you have done—continue to speculate until your head grows grey with thought and your heart heavy with sorrow; until, like them, you too drift away into the great mystery, leaving the mighty problem undetermined. Nevertheless, one thing is certain—evil, whether it tempts or limits, whether it incites disobedience, or springs up in gloomy doubts—evil is the world's form of antagonism to the highest interests of the human soul; and whatever else we may do concerning it, we are summoned to grapple with it and to conquer it, to fight the great moral battle; achieving at last the sovereignty of virtue and the lofty serenity of faith. This is the profoundest method of overcoming the world: this is the significance of the phrase as Christ used it, when He said to His disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

And, in calling your attention to this method of victory over the world, I must express my fear that a great many do not look upon life and its experiences in this light at all—that is, in the light of a moral conflict against antagonistic forces of sin and unbelief. To how many *is* this a fresh and vivid truth—that God has not set man in this sphere of existence merely for indulgence or for any temporary end, but for interests which stretch far beyond the limits of the grave? He is here to do the life-service of duty, whatever the hindrance; if the right demands, to suffer, and to sacrifice inclination and self-will. He is to carry on this like any other conflict, not by running from the field, but by going bravely into it—not by rejecting things around him, but by using them. In other words, he is to fulfil the appointed end of life—not by escaping from the world, nor by neglecting the good that is in it, but by employing this in its noblest possibilities, and resisting all the forms of evil. As he is thrown in contact with material antagonisms, in order that thus may be developed the energies of labor and the results of civilization; as he is obliged to force the seals of knowledge, in order that he may enlarge the scope of intellectual power; so is he placed in contact with the suggestions of doubt and sin, in order that, by resistance to these and by victory over them, he may, in the most radical sense, overcome the world. Still further I observe, that, in this moral sense, man is to overcome the world in two phases. He is to overcome it in its *temptations* and in its *limitations*. I propose to dwell upon each of these points.

I. We must overcome the world in its *temptations*. It has the better of us so long as it can seduce, or terrify us into any impure desire or wicked deed. The point of our victory over it is in the supremacy of holy principles and affections in our hearts bringing every proposition to their test. That man is victorious over the world who wields without surrender the sceptre of God's law, and from whom the world by no expedient can wrest that sceptre. Now, in conducting this assault, the world has various methods and employs many agents. Thus it finds some of its most successful allies in the *appetites*. Countless are the hosts who have yielded to the suggestion of evil lusts. Conscripts drawn by God to fight the battle of life and to scale Alpine heights of duty, they either know not or heed not the summons, but leap without restraint to gratification, or lie basking in the sunshine of voluptuous ease. How many do we see every day who have thus yielded to the world without a struggle. Fools of appetite! Floats on the stream of impulse! Deserters from the campaign to which God has called them! How often they drop by the wayside, bruised and torn, victims of their own passions, cast into the fire and the water by the devil within them. Spirits made a little lower than the angels, fallen much lower than the brute. Immortal souls soaked into the flesh, and sharing the corruption of the bones. Dying, it may be, in the streets, and as the waves of death roll over them, lifting dim eyes to the starry immensity above them, unconscious that it is more limited than *their* destiny, and that those lights are glimmering

from eternal shores, towards which they drift. Have you not often had your attention arrested by some drunkard reeling by you, or collapsing in the kennel?—a human Bedlam, in whom appetite has forced the wards of reason, and let loose the demon or the fool. Perhaps this has been for you merely an amusing spectacle; you have listened curiously to his incongruous chattering, or laughed at his antics. It may be, however, that some feeling of pity has subdued this levity, and you have detected that which made it a very sad and solemn sight—just as when a coffin is carried through a crowded street, and sheds upon the glittering procession of life the shadow of its moral. So you have caught a glimpse of that poor drunkard's *soul*. You have seen the beauty of his abused manhood, the funeral train of his dead possibilities. Perhaps he is a “gentlemanly” drunkard, and you behold not only good clothes, but noble faculties and fine culture mixed with fantastic beastliness and the lees of debauchery. Now, if you should find some statue, of beautiful proportions and wondrous inspiration, lying upon its face shattered, disfigured, wedged in the mire, you would mourn over the desecration. You would say, “What lost wealth! What wasted labor! Into this block of marble genius wrought its energies and breathed its very soul, and now it lies thus, thrown down and trampled upon!” Ah! my friends, God wrought the living statue *there*, that has tumbled from its pedestal. He breathed into it of his own nature. He sent it into the world not to be as a mere statue, a dumb and motionless



shape ; but to be a growing and exhaustless force. He created it not to be as the animal, the bond slave of the flesh, but to be a nobleman of a spirit. The world was spread out around him to be seized and conquered. Realms of infinite truth burst open above him, inviting him to tread those shining coasts along which Newton dropped his plummet, and Herschel sailed,—a Columbus of the skies. Springs of true enjoyment, elements of power—the possibilities that await every soul born into the world—crowded on his right hand and his left. The prerogative assigned him was in every way, in every department of thought and action, to overcome the world. But as the ground-work and significance of all other victories, he was required to contend with the forces that warred against himself—against his own spiritual nature. He was sent into the lists of life to fight with lance and shield. The world challenged him through his appetites. He went down before them. They defaced his heraldry, they tore off his coronet, they have beaten and trampled him into the brutal mass you see before you. There are others more propped and disguised by circumstances, but none the less overcome by the world.

Another element in our nature to which temptation addresses itself is the sentiment of *self-regard*. There are thousands who are not the slaves of vice ; who are guilty of no gross, overt sin ; but through avenues of aspiration and subtle windings of motive, the world has made its way to their hearts. It pleads with their vanity. It provokes the lust of fame. It works in

the schemes of the mart, in the lists of ambition, in the circle of fashion. According to the compass of the soul which it attacks, so are its devices narrow or sublime. Sometimes the heart is won by the paltriest proffers ; sometimes it besieges a man's soul for a long while in vain, until by and by it touches some secret spring and all that stubborn probity gives way. Oh ! this is a most fearful fact for each of us to think of ; the fact that in every heart there *is* some such secret spring that would be weak at the touch of temptation, and that is liable to be assailed. Fearful and yet salutary to think of ; for the thought may serve to keep our moral nature braced. It warns us that we can never stand at ease, or lie down on this field of life, without sentinels of watchfulness and camp-fires of prayer. Sometimes the world's form of temptation assumes a truly royal attitude. To some lofty spirit that would stoop to no mean quarry, it promises all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, if that spirit will only dethrone God and worship it. It offers honors of place, and majesties of power, and the homage of the multitude. Nowhere is its influence so fearfully displayed as when it attacks a nature enriched with large gifts and capabilities, yet containing no vital germ of virtue, and bound by no sanction of religion, and which with all its splendor of movement gravitates to mere *self-interest*. A man like this may walk long in the path of rectitude and brush away common snares with his feet. But the moment he encounters something that touches the leading purpose of his soul, temptation springs upon him and Achilles

is wounded in the heel. The statesman, the philanthropist, the severe patriot, is taken captive by "ambition, the last infirmity of noble minds." Is not this a very melancholy spectacle? A man standing in some high place of intellect and honor, splendid as ever in the brain, but on one side of him—the moral side—stricken clear down with paralysis! A man saturated with the finest culture, with the most delicate sensibilities playing in his nature, with the escutcheon of pride in eye and forehead, flushed with the heraldry of genius, scorning the temptations of the flesh, beating upward like an eagle towards some lofty point; yet carrying a hard, cold, selfish heart, and marked as a deserter from the right. When some great occasion breaks, and imperilled justice calls to him from the ground, and far above all mean interests and clanging factions the voice of duty summons him like the very trump of God, he vacillates, he takes up the lance droopingly, he lets the ark of the righteous cause totter, he cowers before the dagon of the hour, he falls away from the good cause, he betrays it, nay, he becomes hot against it; and the words of the man that might have been tones of regeneration and of victory, clatter upon our ears like "thirty pieces of silver."

Ah! a man may chain his appetites, and hold the realm of knowledge within the cincture of his brain, and yet in the saddest aspect of all be overcome by the world. And again I say, how startling is the fact that one may hold on steadfastly up to a particular point, and there all gives way. O my brother man, meaning to live the life of duty, the life of religion!

the world is a mighty antagonist, subtle as it is strong; more to be dreaded in its whispers to the heart's secret inclination than in gross shapes of evil. And let me say to you that it is a great thing in this respect to overcome the world. It is a great thing by God's help and your own effort to keep it in its place, and say to its eager pressure, "Thus far and no farther." A great thing, O merchant! to carry the clue of rectitude through the labyrinths of traffic, and to feel the woof of eternal sanctions crossing the warp of daily interests. A great thing, O politician! to withstand the fickle teasings of popularity, to scorn the palatable lie, and keep God's signet upon your conscience. A great thing, O man! whatever your condition, to resist the appeals of envy and revenge, of avarice and pleasure, and to feel that your life has higher ends than these. Strenuous must be the endeavor but proportionally blest is the victory of him who in all these issues overcomes the world.

There is one other strong temptation that I will specify, and that is *fear* of the world. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." There are those who, perhaps, can resist allurements, and yet they are not able to withstand threats and frowns. It may be that they will not yield to any positive wrong,—but they will withhold some good, or repress some truth, or smother some honest conviction, dreading the consequences. A potent spell is laid upon the souls of some men by the question, "What will they say?" Many a heart has been so scared by the fear of ridicule as to conceal and even drive away its religious convictions. Many

a foot has halted in the good cause, and retreated from it, because of the sacrifice. This was the temptation which the apostles had to encounter, though in forms more terrible than *we* know ; scoffs, stripes, imprisonment, crucifixion, stood before them, to intimidate them and to forbid their preaching Christ. But His spirit was sufficient for them. They had witnessed His example. They had heard his declaration, " Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," and remembering this *they* also were enabled to overcome it. And catching the same spirit, we too may overcome it in all its forms of temptation—whether it addresses our appetites, our aspirations, or our fears.

II. But the world meets us not only with temptations but with *limitations* ; and we are called upon to overcome it by *endurance*, as well as with resistance. Not always soliciting our impulses, not always alarming our fears, it sometimes vanquishes us by taking or by withholding something from us. Thus it overcomes us by *disappointment*. We have sought prosperity and have not found it ; we have tried for happiness, but in vain. Our utmost diligence has failed to secure success. Our hearts have garnered treasures that have wasted away, leaving them empty and desolate. We have accumulated wealth, but misfortune has scattered it to the winds ; or we retain it, but in connection with a diseased body and a broken spirit. We have striven for fame, and our reputation is blasted ; we have gained it, but at the cost of a wounded conscience. We have relied upon friendship, and it has

deceived us ; we have loved, but those we loved are dust. And it may be with all this there falls upon us a great and gloomy doubt. We question whether there is any real good. At least the good we expected has not been attained, or if good has been attained it is not what we expected. And as we thus muse upon the deceitfulness of human calculations, and the little value of all we strive for, having no religious trust, we are disposed to write "vanity of vanities" upon all things, and do not see that all is *not* vanity. And so we are overcome by the defeats and desolations of the world.


Or we have been smitten by some great sorrow, and we know not where to look for consolation. Our faith in God was quite spontaneous in hours of sunshine, but it lags and droops under actual calamity. We do not comprehend our affliction, and in irritable murmurs or in sullen unbelief we confess the world's victory over us.

Or our souls are locked up in material conceptions, and we are confounded by the mystery of death. We are destitute of spiritual vision, and our eyesight strikes only upon the blank wall of the sepulchre. We have fed no part of our nature but the senses. But things around us are changing and passing away. There is no intelligence in the look of the dead. There is no work or device in the grave. We have seen no well-known form returning from that dim region to tell us of another life, and to assure us that thought and affection do not perish in our ashes.

But why proceed with illustrations? Every man

knows what limitations *he* has encountered in the world. And if he has really overcome them, he knows that he has done thus only by the aid of a vision that looks beyond this world, and a trust not fastened to the earth. It is this spiritual confidence that turns the edge of disappointment, transfigures sorrow and solves the problem of death. Under the ample dome of Christian perception all these material limitations dwindle away. They grow dim beneath the galaxy of grander realities. In that perception the world has no impassable barriers, no omnipotent doubts. Its extremest limit is but a crisis of change and ascension. In the spirit of the Christian there is a perpetual spring-tide, and in the wintry valleys he hears the ripple of ever-flowing streams. And it is a mighty victory, when inspired by the silent assurances of faith, he overcomes the world by *endurance*.

And in the two forms thus indicated in this discourse must we meet and experience the great conflict of life. In one way or another does the world place itself thus in antagonism to every human soul. The *world*—in its problem of evil, in its shapes of sin, in its suggestions of unbelief and despair. Not any good or sacred thing in the world must we confound with these. We must set the mark of reprobation upon no tender relation, no true enjoyment. We must not identify with this evil the world of nature that God has made and filled with life and beauty. So glorious, brimming over with loveliness, with the munificence of countless blessings, and with golden sunshine. No, rather may we turn to that world as an ally in life's



struggle. See how steadily it does its work, and rounds all things according to the perfect law. See how calmly the grass grows, and the leaf unfolds, and each form of being ranges itself in faithful energy or silent resignation, unfolding in sunlight, receptive in the shower. Do not these aspects of nature afford symbols and lessons for ourselves, teaching us how to do and to endure?

But this world of evil, this world of temptations and of limitations, in one form and another does it encounter and press upon the human soul. Great is the conflict that goes on unseen by human eyes, in the secret arena of the human heart, where this world of evil ranges its hosts and challenges our passions and our fears. And in this conflict one of three results is inevitable. Either we are conquered by the world; or we enter into alliance with it; or we overcome it. And oh! let us remember how it was with Jesus. Did I speak of the help which we may draw from nature in this inward battle? We need something nearer to us, more in sympathy with us than this. Nature does not sin, nature has not our human consciousness. One who thoroughly knows us—One who is closely in sympathy with us—One who has passed through our experiences and won the victory in them, whether of temptation or limitation—He alone can help us. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." To every tried and tempted spirit how welcome, how assuring, how all-sufficient, are these calm, triumphant words. Martin Luther said that "such a saying as this is worthy of being carried from Rome

to Jerusalem on our knees." And men *have* carried it on their knees, and have borne it in their hearts in many a struggle, and are enabled by the help that is in this assurance to suffer and to act. And thus they do and endure, until, as they pass upward, methinks Christ gives them palms greener than any that were strewn along His earthly way, and they wave them as tokens that in the power of His life and of His spirit, *they* too have overcome the world.







